

THE RUNAWAY JURY

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revisions

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Based on the novel by

John Grisham

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**For Educational
Purposes Only**

RUNAWAY JURY

MUSIC from 1980.

A LOW POV SHOT pursues a LAUGHING GIRL OF 7 down the corridor of a small house. The child has a TOY GUN in her hand and there is an ominous, fatal quality to the image which will not be forgotten. Now we arrive in a bedroom and the little girl turns and points the gun into CAMERA. But the unseen follower looks-away and the SHOT PANS RIGHT to where something glints between the mattress and the bed frame...

MUSIC from 2000.

VIDEO SURVEILLANCE of various people. First of them, NICK EASTER, a likeable, good looking guy in an ELECTRONICS STORE. A very attractive young woman, AMANDA, appears in FRAME, asks a question.

AMANDA (O.S.)

Nick Easter. Works in an electronics store. Says he has no particular feelings about guns either way...

Nick leads Amanda over to a video game.

INT. FITCH'S HQ - NIGHT

RANKIN FITCH, dark and forceful, watches the SURVEILLANCE TAPE on BIG TV SCREEN with total concentration. Nick and Amanda play a VIOLENT VIDEO GAME. Nick blasts away happily.

Also watching are various LAWYERS, INVESTIGATORS, JURY CONSULTANTS, and INTERNS.

FITCH

I like him.

DOYLE

He lied about being in college.

DOYLE is Fitch's LEAD INVESTIGATOR, a large, messy man who doesn't eat so much as graze. At the moment he's tossing DRIED PAPAYA CHUNKS into his mouth.

FITCH

A natural embarrassment at being a loser. I'd sit him.

A FAT WOMAN comes on SCREEN, walking down the street. OLIVER McADOO, fresh out of law school, irrepressible, fools with the FORWARD/REVERSE WHEEL, making her dance back and forth.

DURWOOD CABLE, 50, bald and bronzed, leans forward.

CABLE

I know this woman by reputation. Her husband shoots on the same land as I do and I think she'd be a fine juror.

FITCH

I don't trust fat women. They're resentful and unpredictable. And yes, Marcia, that does apply to you too.

Oliver laughs at MARCIA, a FAT JURY CONSULTANT.

FITCH

Next.

CABLE

I must object. I'm the lawyer who'll be in court conducting the defense and I believe that this woman...

FITCH

How many of these gun lawsuits have you been involved in?

CABLE

None, but I know the community and...

FITCH

Let's get this clear. I design the legal strategy and you go into court and execute it. That's the way they want it and that's the way it's gonna be and if you don't like it I'll find someone else. So, whaddaya say?

Cable is a buttoned down outdoorsman and modern Southerner who takes vacations in Europe and knows about wine. And he's not used to rudeness as ferocious as this.

CABLE

All I wanted was to contribute my local knowledge, to be heard.

FITCH

You've been heard. Next.

RIKKI COLEMAN, fresh faced, running with a stroller. Amanda runs up beside her.

AMANDA

Rikkie Coleman. Baptist, married to a real serious churchgoing type.

DOYLE

I got her medical records. Had an abortion in college.

FITCH

Husband know?

AMANDA

I would seriously doubt it.

FITCH

I love her.

Next up MILLIE DUPREE, 48, seen gardening with HUSBAND.

AMANDA

Large but not fat. A real nice woman.
Married to him, Hoppy, a struggling
realtor. Five kids.

See Hoppy coming out of DUPREE REALTY, a run down second floor office in a strip mall, locking up. Now he turns, looks up at his name on the window, and scratches his head, baffled at his own failure.

Millie arrives in an old car with kids. Hoppy brightens.

FITCH

Workable.

FRANK HERRERA. Long shot across street to a CONSTRUCTION SITE.

DOYLE

Frank Herrera. Cuban. In construction.
And got shot about five years ago.

CABLE

Bye bye, Frankie.

FITCH

See, this is where you display your
ignorance once again.

CABLE

(shocked)

I beg your pardon?

FITCH

Getting shot can swing a person either way. "If the guy who shot me *hadn't* had a gun I wouldn'ta got shot," or "If *I'd* had a gun I coulda defended myself."

He and Doyle study Herrera talking to a BIG MAN. Now Herrera prods the guy in the chest with the tip of his finger.

FITCH

I go with he carries a gun now and likes it. Every man for himself.

DOYLE

Me too. Plus he's been sued a coupla times by injured workers.

FITCH

So let's hope the other side makes the same mistaken assumptions our esteemed colleague over here made...

NEW SHOT: DILLON, a tough, handsome guy, 26, lifts weights. Amanda enters in SPANDEX. Oliver titters.

AMANDA

Dillon. Accountant for an ad agency. Health nut like Rikki Coleman...

FITCH

Closet Queen.

DOYLE

Oh, come on, Rankin.

With Amanda right beside him, Dillon's eyes follow a YOUNG MAN passing by.

DOYLE

My God, you're psychic.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Fitch comes out with Doyle. They look up the street toward the top half of an old bank building. Lights are on. A shadow passes by the window.

FITCH

Wendell Rohr, bloodsucker, the fine white haired crusader - with a jet.

He spits on the ground and turns away.

INT. WENDELL ROHR'S HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

WENDELL ROHR, so described - but also vain, elegant and seductive - looks down at Fitch.

ROHR

There he goes, Rankin Fitch, the best paid legal thug that money can buy.

LAWYER

Who is he?

Fitch gets in the back of a black LINCOLN NAVIGATOR.

ROHR

He was a big lawyer in Washington, own firm, good rep, and then he went off the rails, a woman, I think, started drinking, eventually got disbarred.

LAWYER

Geez...

Fitch is driven off by Doyle.

ROHR

Now he's sobered up and works behind the scenes. He's the gun companies' strategist, but he's a street fighter, pulls every dirty trick in the book, including jury tampering. True scum.

He turns back to his BIG TV SCREEN.

A SHOT of JERRY FERNANDEZ, 35, chatting up A WOMAN in a BAR.

INVESTIGATOR

Okay, this is Jerry Fernandez, car salesman, in the middle of a divorce, gambles, screws around, in debt.

ROHR

My kind of guy. I can always get through to a villain...

INT. NICK'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nick Easter is making love to MARLEE, his girlfriend in this small apartment. She's gotten twisted around so her head is at the foot of the bed and Nick is so forceful her head hangs off the end. Upside down she becomes aware of news on TV.

UPSIDE DOWN NEWS MAN

Jury selection begins today in the civil suit of Celeste Wood versus gun manufacturer, GT-Tech. For Ms. Wood, we have millionaire lawyer, Wendell Rohr, who made his fortune suing first asbestos and then big tobacco, and for the gun company, local lawyer, Durwood Cable...

There are shots of both men.

UPSIDE DOWN NEWS MAN

Celeste's story is this...

But Marlee's orgasm buries any further commentary and when it's over, so is that segment of news.

SAME PLACE - LATER

Nick and Marlee are at the door. Marlee is a driven, intelligent woman in her late twenties, indifferent to her beauty until it's needed. She has dark eyes, a wide mouth, and a slender, athletic body.

NICK
When will I see you again?

MARLEE
We should be careful.

NICK
I have a good feeling.

MARLEE
It's about time, huh?

NICK
I'm with you all the way, Marlee.

MARLEE
That's why I love you.

They kiss. Nick looks at his watch.

NICK
Maybe if we're quick? You know, it
could be weeks before we get another
chance.

MARLEE
Okay.

She starts to unzip.

EXT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE NICK'S PLACE - DAY

Nick opens the door and looks both ways. No one around.
Marlee comes out looking doubly satisfied.

NICK
Take the back stairs.

She kisses him and walks quickly away. He doesn't take his
eyes off her until she's gone.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - DAY

Nick leaves his small apartment building and walks toward NEW
ORLEANS CENTRAL COURT.

JUDGE HARKIN (O.S.)
Your number, please?

GRIMES (O.S.)
Uh, sixty-three.

JUDGE HARKIN (O.S.)
And, Mr Grimes, you are legally blind,
are you not?

INT. COURT.- DAY

HERMAN GRIMES stares blindly into CAMERA. He is a severe looking man, aged fifty-nine.

GRIMES

Yes, I am sir.

JUDGE HARKIN

Well, Mr. Grimes, you are excused from jury duty. You're free to go.

GRIMES

Who says blind people can't serve on juries?

Fitch, with Doyle at his side, looks up from the newspaper he was pretending to read.

THE HONORABLE FREDERICK HARKIN, a meticulous, sandy haired man in his mid fifties, inconsequential but basically decent, appears vaguely alarmed.

JUDGE HARKIN

Well, nobody, but as a general rule most everybody who comes up here wants to be someplace else.

GRIMES

Well I don't.

JUDGE HARKIN

Gentlemen?

Nick, sitting in the JURY POOL not far from Grimes, watches, interested. Wendell Rohr and Durwood Cable are clearly in an equal fix. Who's going to say no to a blind man?

ROHR

For the plaintiff, we would welcome Mr. Grimes on our jury.

FITCH

(low contempt)

"Our jury"...

CABLE

As would we on the defense.

He turns to Fitch. Low:

CABLE

Great work, Fitch. I never saw a damn thing about this guy.

FITCH

Shut up and keep smiling.

CABLE
 (through a grimace of
 a smile)
 How does a blind man feel about guns?

FITCH
 Well, I don't suppose you're gonna
 find "duck hunting" at the top of his
 list of hobbies, do you?
 (to Doyle)
 How the hell did this happen, Doyle?

Doyle, who has just filled his mouth with DRIED APRICOTS,
 shrugs out a gluey, chewing reply.

DOYLE
 Never thought it would come to pass,
 boss. What can I tell you?

FITCH
 "Sorry" might be nice.

DOYLE
 Sorry.

SAME PLACE - ANOTHER DAY

Nick is now among a mere 15 people. He sits between THE FAT
 WOMAN and a MAN reading "Vegetarian Times." Right in front of
 him is ANGEL, a pretty young black woman, who, he notices is
 reading a book titled, "ARIES - WHO YOU ARE."

THE FAT WOMAN stands up for selection.

JUDGE HARKIN
 Mr. Cable?

CABLE
 (through clenched
 teeth)
 We're going to use one of our
 peremptory strikes.

Fitch smiles to himself as the woman leaves.

JUDGE HARKIN
 Number 15, Nick Easter.

Nick stands.

CABLE
 (to Fitch)
 Thanks to you, we've only got one
 strike left.

FITCH

Save it for the vegetarian. Easter's an okay kid. He lies to puff himself up, but you can work with that.

CABLE

Your Honor, we have no objection to Mr. Easter.

ROHR

Neither do we. Welcome aboard, Mr. Easter.

Nick smiles.

EXT. LARGE HOUSE BY THE SEA - DAY

Outside the house are parked 5 LIMOS, a couple of regular cars, and Fitch's Lincoln Navigator.

FITCH (O.S.)

This is what we got. 12 Jurors, 3 Alternates.

INT. RENTED HOUSE BY SEA - NIGHT

5 CEOs from 5 GUN MANUFACTURERS and one NRA REPRESENTATIVE, all with drinks in hand, watch as Fitch rams a RW-CDROM into a computer by a LARGE SCREEN TV.

DIGITAL IMAGES mainly in color show thumbnails of the 15. As he names them, we see an image appropriate to his comment.

FITCH

Angel Weese, female, black, early 20s, believes in channeling, faith healing. Frank Herrera, ex of Cuba, - he's the one who was shot. Loreen Duke, black, 50s, sings in the church choir, Stella Hulich, 40, married, likes a drink now and then...

He looks up at JANKLE, the CEO of GT-TECH, a pugnacious man with bleary eyes and wet lips.

FITCH

David Dillon, 32, unmarried, works in advertising, Nick Easter, 28, works in an electronics store.

A FRAME from the tape: Nick blasting away at the VIDEO GAME.

FITCH

Herman Grimes, 49, blind...

DOYLE (O.S.)

... as a bat...

He's off to one side, demolishing JUMBO SHRIMP off a silver tray. Everyone frowns at him, including Fitch.

FITCH

Millie Dupree, 48, housewife. Sylvia Tatum, divorced, bartender. Rikki Coleman, wife, Baptist. Lonnie Shaver, supermarket manager. Jerry Fernandez, car salesman. The alternates are, Shine Royce, unemployed, Phillip Savelle, tree surgeon...

DOYLE

... and glass blower...

He throws some PEANUTS into his mouth.

FITCH

Thank you, Doyle - we ran out of strikes on that one - and Henry Vu, Vietnamese shrimp fisherman.

He pushes the last button and the IMAGES lay out on screen like uncut POSTAGE STAMPS: The Jury.

JANKLE

I'm sure we're all very impressed with the expensive technology - which the fund is paying for - but is this what we all flew in here for?

FITCH

I know what you all think of me. I'm your junkyard dog, hired to bite the burglar not sit on the couch, I understand that and I don't care, I do my job and do it well and so far I've beaten back ten lawsuits like this one; but Wood has a hole in her head where a bullet went in and tear ducts where water comes out, endlessly. She moves my heart and I don't even have one, so...

JANKLE

I think we're aware of the...

FITCH

If Rohr succeeds here, his firm'll take every accidental gunshot case in the country and as you know that's an incredible lot of cases. He could bleed you dry inside of a decade. All of you. But if we win, it may keep 'em away for a while. I asked you to fly in because to win may take money. How's the fund?

VANDEMEER, the smoothest of the CEOs, looks to a ruddy looking man with a toupe named ECKER.

ECKER

The Sports Heritage Fund currently stands at nine million, three hundred and sixty eight thousand.

FITCH

Bump it up. As for you, Jankle, it was your gun that put the bullet in her head, so for God's sake sober up before you take the stand.

He turns and walks out. Doyle pours the last fifty peanuts into his hand and shambles out after him, grinning.

EXT. COURT - DAY

Marlee sits on the crowded COURTHOUSE STEPS.

Nearby are several TV REPORTERS, looking into CAMERA.

TV REPORTER

Today is the first day in the civil suit of Celeste Wood, gunshot victim, against GT-Tech, gun manufacturer...

Nick passes by, sees Marlee, a faint nod, and he's gone.

EXT. REAR OF COURTHOUSE - DAY

Nick walks around the back, unrecognized, and enters.

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

LOU DELL, a woman of 60 in polyester pants and old sneakers sits outside the jury room reading a battered romance.

LOU

Hello, looking for the jury room?

NICK

Yes. I'm Nick Easter. "Juror".

LOU

You're the first.

Lou leads him into the jury room.

LOU

Coffee and donuts are over there, but these muffins I made myself.

Nick looks at an oily set of the aforementioned. And grins.

NICK
Mmm, they look delicious.

LOU
Been making them for 18 years. Used to
put raisins in them, but I had to stop.

NICK
Why?

LOU
(conspiratorially)
Gas.

NICK
Ah.

Herman Grimes, the blind man, enters with his WIFE, here for
the first day just to show him the ropes.

NICK
Hello, I'm Nick Easter. I went to law
school, so if you have any questions,
I'd be happy to help.

GRIMES
Thank you.

NICK
Of course, if I can help in any other
way, please let me know too. For what
it's worth, my brother is blind.

He winks at Mrs. Grimes. "I'll take care of him."

GRIMES
Well, I'll let you know.

STELLA HULIC enters. She's a scraggly looking woman with a
hangover.

NICK
Hello, I'm Nick Easter. You're?..

STELLA
Stella Hulic. I tried to get out of
this, but fat chance. I wouldn't mind
if it started a little later...

NICK
Right, getting up in the morning.
Torture. Look, I went to law school,
if you have any questions, I pretty
much know the drill...

INT. FITCH'S HQ - DAY

Lots of TVs are on, most tuned to various news channels, one louder than the others, Court TV covering the about to start trial. But the largest screen of all is not on.

Doyle and Fitch sit before it. Doyle is showing Fitch a BRIEFCASE CAMERA.

DOYLE

Oliver's carrying one of these now.

Fitch admires the MICRO-CAMERA inside the case.

DOYLE

He'll point it at the jury and we'll switch on that screen and you won't have to go to court to keep in touch.

FITCH

Switch it on now. Let's see where Oliver's at. I'll bet he's goofing off somewhere.

He switches the switch.

IMAGE: A PAIR OF SHOES with pants falling around them.

OLIVER (O.S.)

Eddy?

EDDY (O.S.)

Yeah?

OLIVER (O.S.)

Where are you?

INT. COURTHOUSE TOILET - DAY

Oliver's co-novice lawyer is:

EDDY

I'm over here, washing my hands.

Behind him Oliver's feet can be seen below the stall door along with THE BRIEFCASE.

OLIVER

Well, I think you may want to hold onto your hat, old pal, 'cause here comes Mr. Fitch!

INT. FITCH'S HQ - DAY

Boom - and the echo of laughter overloads the case's limited audio capacity. Fitch glances at Doyle, who's trying not to smile.

INT. JURY ROOM - DAY

All the jurors are here now. Nick approaches Angel, the New Age black woman. He stops in front of her and squints his eyes speculatively.

NICK
Aries?

ANGEL
Oh, my God, how did you know?

NICK
I'm very sensitive like that.

ANGEL
I'm Angel Weese. That was...

NICK
Nick Easter, Virgo, went to law school, saw the light, left. Anything you need, just send out the vibe...

He sees Jerry over in a corner, drinking coffee and eyeing SYLVIA, who stands not far away, dressed to tempt. Her hair is ultra-frizzed and has pink bows in it. She has a nice ass.

NICK
Hi, you're Jerry, right?

JERRY
Right, how ya doing, man?

Nick glances at Sylvia and then leans in close to Jerry.

NICK
So... who's gonna make the poodle go woof-woof, you or me?

JERRY
(laughing)
Me first! Me first!

Sylvia turns toward the two laughing men, smiles archly, and walks over. From now on she'll be known as:

POODLE
What are you fellas chortling about?

JERRY
Oh, this and that, babe. I'm Jerry, this is Nick.

POODLE
And this is Rikki and Loreen...

LOREEN is a large black woman who has a strange habit of picking lint off her clothes with a rolled up bit of scotch tape. After introductions are complete:

RIKKI

I heard you say you were a law student?

NICK

Yes, I was. Did three years of it.

RIKKI

So what are we supposed to do about electing a foreman?

Several other people have heard her question and are similarly interested in the problem.

NICK

Well, it's our job to get right down to it. And I propose Herman Grimes.

Everyone looks baffled.

NICK

Herman? Mr. Grimes?

He points at the blind man. Clever move.

NICK

All those in favor raise their right hand.

No one really wants Grimes, but what the hell are they going to do? One by one, the hands go up.

NICK

Okay, that's taken care of. Say, Lou...

Lou has just entered.

NICK

What's the lunch situation?

LOU

It's set for one o'clock. I've got some menus I'll pass around in a minute, but first of all, we need to talk about selecting a jury foreman.

NICK

Done it.

He grins. Lou looks amazed. A lot of the Jurors laugh, pleased with themselves. Boy, we're fast...

INT. COURT - DAY

All the lawyers are here already, including ROHR and CABLE, along with FITCH, DOYLE, OLIVER with his case, and all the GUN COMPANY CEOs. There are PRINT and TV REPORTERS, WALL ST. ANALYSTS, and the PUBLIC. Almost invisible is the PLAINTIFF, CELESTE WOOD, in a wheelchair next to Rohr. She wears a hat. She looks up as JUDGE HARKIN is announced and enters.

INT. JURY ROOM - DAY

Nick writes "one o'clock" on his menu as Lou enters to bring the JURY to Court. He screws up the menu and tosses it out the window as he accompanies the other jurors out of the room.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Marlee watches the piece of paper fall. She picks it up.

INT. COURT - DAY

A STEADYCAM SHOT accompanies the Jurors as they walk along a corridor and enter the courtroom. It's a very imposing moment, like coming out onto stage.

A bustle as they enter. It is they, after all, who will make the decision. Fitch, pretending to check documents, observes them closely.

JUDGE HARKIN

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen of the jury.

JURY

Good morning...

JUDGE HARKIN

Do we have a jury foreman?

GRIMES

Yes, it's me, your Honor.

Nick watches with concealed amusement the muted shock of all concerned, particularly the studied non-reactions of Fitch and Cable.

JUDGE HARKIN

Okay...

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Lou comes out and starts walking up the street.

INT. COURT - DAY

Rohr is on his feet, chin in hand, as if wondering how to begin his OPENING STATEMENT. As if.

ROHR

My name is Wendell Rohr and I am the plaintiff's lawyer. The plaintiff is Celeste Wood here... Celeste would like to stand up and say hello, but she cannot.

Fitch doodles naked women in his newspaper.

ROHR

We are seeking actual and punitive damages from GT-Tech, the gun company, under two legal theories. First, we believe a company that makes a product is obliged to make it as safe as they possibly can. No one ever had to sue Tylenol to get them to put safety caps on their bottles.

INT. DELI - DAY

Lou comes in and starts giving her order to the Deli Man. Marlee is seen sitting nearby. Now she leaves.

ROHR (O.S.)

Two, we believe a company has a duty under the law to advertise the product honestly. To make claims that are lethally misleading, as tobacco companies did on the issue of health and addiction, is morally and legally wrong.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - DAY

Marlee walks over to a NEWS STAND and buys the latest edition of "SPORTS ILLUSTRATED."

ROHR (O.S.)

These are the dry, legal outlines of our case. But no case, no case I was ever involved in, was ever about "the law".

INT. COURT - DAY

Nick watches Rohr as he parades in front of the jury.

ROHR

The law is just the instrument with which you, the jury, respond to human pain. And the pain of my client is something I do not wish to dwell on and do not wish to burden your souls with until it becomes necessary. I know you will be fair and I pray you'll show compassion. Thank you.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - DAY

Marlee enters a phone booth and dials. From where she is, she can see the Deli and the DELI OWNER picking up the phone.

MARLEE

Hello,--I'm calling from the courthouse about lunch. The Judge isn't going to break until two, so would you hold everything until then?... Thank you.

INT. COURT - DAY

Cable is now before the Jury to make his OPENING STATEMENT.

CABLE

I too will be brief. Our sympathy goes out to Mrs. Wood. Our sympathy goes out to everyone hurt in any way by any thing. But the question here is who is responsible?

INT. COURT - DAY

Nick covertly watches his fellow jurors for reactions, as do Fitch and Co down on the floor. JURY CONSULTANTS make notes. "Juror 7, arms crossed. Negative." "Juror 3 checks watch."

CABLE

Every gun that's sold comes with safety instructions. If someone doesn't bother to read them, should we be held liable?

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Marlee walks up the side stairs and finds the MEN'S ROOM.

CABLE

Is Ford held liable if someone hits the accelerator instead of the brake?

She checks both ways and then quickly ducks in.

INT. MENS ROOM - DAY

Marlee hides the SPORTS ILLUSTRATED behind one of the tanks.

CABLE 'O.S.)

Now let's talk about advertising. If I advertise a piece of rope by saying, "This rope'll help you climb from the house if there's a fire," and you go hang yourself with it...

EXT. COURTHOUSE CORRIDOR - DAY

Marlee exits the bathroom and walks toward Court.

CABLE (O.S.)

... am I to be held liable for false advertising? Does that sound right to you? It makes no sense... No, I'm sorry, it *does* make sense - if you're Mr. Rohr over there...

INT. COURT - DAY

Marlee enters court at the back and whispers to a BAILIFF. She hands him a note and points at Fitch.

CABLE (O.S.)

... with his own private jet - asbestos bought that - and his own thousand acre "plantation" - tobacco litigation bought that - Yeah, pretty funny, huh? The plantation?

Nick watches Fitch get the note and read it. Now he asks the Bailiff something. The man points to the rear of the court Fitch jumps up and heads out.

EXT. COURT - DAY

From her hiding place across the street, Marlee watches amused as Fitch comes out with Doyle. They look around. See no woman meeting the Bailiff's description. Fitch looks at the note again. It says:

"THIS AFTERNOON JUROR NUMBER 6, JERRY FERNANDEZ, WILL ENTER COURT CARRYING TODAY'S SPORT ILLUSTRATED."

INT. JURY ROOM - DAY

Jerry is talking to Poodle. Lonnie, the black supermarket manager, and Dillon, the alleged closet queen, are on cell phones. Loreen, the large black woman, compulsively de-lints her clothes with scotch tape. Rikki does knee-bends while reading an inspirational book. Nick chats with Herrera, Herman, Millie, and Stella.

NICK

Sometimes in a case this big, one this important, the opening statements go on for two or three days.

STELLA

If it'd gone on any longer I would have fainted. I got a hangover and I'm starving.

Nick looks at his watch. It's 1.15 already.

HERRERA

For my money, it could have taken five minutes or five days and it wouldn't make any difference. Of course, I'm sorry for the woman, but...

GRIMES

Am I right in thinking the judge told us specifically not to talk about the case until it's time to deliberate?

Herrera looks chastised... and a little pissed.

NICK

It's okay to talk about it in general terms. Of course, juries always do...

(a wink at Herrera)

I have to go to the bathroom.

He walks out.

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Nick walks past the bathroom and sneaks down the back stairs.

INT. MAHONEY'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Judge Harkin and friends are dining. Nick enters and comes up behind the Judge, who is about to suck down an oyster.

NICK

Are you enjoying your oysters? What next, a steak? French fries?

Harkin twists his neck. Nick does not move to make it easier.

JUDGE HARKIN

Do I?...

NICK

Juror Number 5. Nick Easter. *Hungry* Juror Number 5. While you're feasting, we jurors still haven't received so much as a popsicle. And I don't think that's right, do you?

JUDGE HARKIN

No. No, most certainly not. This has never happened before. Where's Lou?

NICK

I don't know, but I'd like to suggest we all come over here today and eat as well as you're eating. That'd be fair.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

From the courthouse steps, Doyle, who has just taken a huge bite out of a SANDWICH, sees the JURY being ushered over to Mahoneys. He picks up the phone and speaks with full mouth.

DOYLE

It's me! Gueff what's happening.

FITCH (O.S.)

Furprife me.

INT. MAHONEY'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Nick, the hero, sits at the head of the table with Jerry on one side and Millie on the other. Poodle sits next to Jerry. Grimes sits at the other end with Lonnie, Stella, and Rikki.

Fitch and Doyle enter quickly, and then slow down and go stand at the bar. Both watch Jerry intently.

DOYLE

What do you think he's up to?

FITCH

It's a shakedown. Has to be.

Nick goes to fetch some ketchup and brings it back to Millie with a flourish. No man was ever so polite or helpful...

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

On his way back to the jury room, Nick pops into the Mens Room.

INT. MENS ROOM - DAY

Nick grabs the Sports Illustrated from behind the tank and exits.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

As the jury is led back toward the courtroom, Nick bustles up close to Jerry who is flirting with Poodle.

NICK

Hey, Jerry, wanna look at this? It just came out.

But Jerry's too busy.

JERRY

Nah, it's okay.

Nick almost panics. Low and suggestive:

NICK

Take a look at the picture of the women's basketball team... Center spread.

JERRY

Yeah? --

Nick slaps Jerry in the tummy with the magazine. Jerry grabs it and...

INT. COURT - DAY

Fitch and Doyle watch as... There he is, bold as brass! Jerry - with *Sports Illustrated* under his arm!

FITCH

Unbelievable... Back to base.

He and Doyle hurry out, past Rohr, who's leaning in on Celeste.

ROHR

What the hell's George doing here?

He indicates a pleasant, solicitous looking man in the audience.

CELESTE

He's here to support me.

ROHR

Celeste, we're looking for 400 million dollars here. Never mind how that sum could change your life, it could change *public policy*. So please, keep George away, okay? and keep your marriage plans secret...

CELESTE

I'm sorry. He just loves me so much...

ROHR

Well, I'm sure he'll love you even more when you've got a couple of hundred million in the bank...

Celeste smiles. Were it not for fear of whatever might lie under the hat, you'd have to say she's pretty attractive.

INT. FITCH'S HQ - DAY

Fitch dashes in and stands in front of the image of the JURY brought to him courtesy of Oliver's BRIEFCASE. Celeste can be heard being introduced and sworn in.

FITCH
 (jabbing at Jerry)
 I want to know what this sceeve had
 for breakfast July 1st, 1989. I want...

DOYLE
 Why? --

FITCH
 For God's sake, Doyle, don't try me.
 He looks back to the SCREEN. The SHOT of the jury lurches
 sideways and then tips over onto its SIDE.

FITCH
 Now what?

DOYLE
 Briefcase fell over.

INT. COURT - DAY

Oliver has just kicked over the case but isn't aware of it
 because he's *gaping* at

CELESTE WOOD,

who has just removed her hat in order to wipe her brow and
 fan herself and... she has A GHASTLY WOUND which runs along
 the side of her head like an open ditch.

The whole jury FLINCHES - all but lucky Grimes.

Oliver's BEEPER starts to VIBRATE. He looks down at it. Sees
 a message, moves the CASE back into place.

ROHR
 You live in Parkwood, am I correct? A
 good neighborhood?

CELESTE
 One of the best, but my husband, God
 rest his soul, died of liver cancer
 two years ago and I was living alone
 and I became afraid. I went out and
 bought some gun magazines.

ROHR
 We'd like to present our first exhibit.

An "advertising feature" for a GT-Tech gun, "The Lady Auto."

ROHR
 What did this "ad" for "The Lady Auto"
 make you think?

CELESTE

That if I bought this gun and had it in the house I'd be safer.

ROHR

Was there anything in this so-called ad that gave you any information to the contrary?

CELESTE

No.

ROHR

No mention of the dozens of studies which show that...

Celeste runs her forefinger along the deep, deep scar, and gives it an abstracted scratch. Everyone flinches.

ROHR

... that a gun kept in the house is 22 times more likely to end up killing someone you know, including you, than being used in self-defense?

The finger - mercifully - ceases to scratch. The jury lets out its collective breath.

EXT. SMALL SOUTHERN TOWN - DAY

Marlee drives up to a CONVENIENCE STORE in an anonymous four year old car, parks, and heads for a phone booth.

CELESTE (O.S.)

No.

ROHR (O.S.)

And no mention, I'm sure, of the fact that gun sales to men have slowed down so manufacturers are now targeting women as a...

INT. FITCH'S HQ - DAY

Fitch studies the screen - upright once more.

CABLE

Objection! Leading and argumentative.

FITCH

Finally.

JUDGE HARKIN

Sustained. Mr. Rohr, you can make your speeches during closing arguments...

The PHONE RINGS. Fitch waits for Doyle to activate the trace and then picks up.

FITCH
(gruffly)

Yeah?

INTERCUT

Marlee stands in the afternoon light, looking as beautiful as Fitch looks malevolent.

MARLEE
How'd you like my little trick with
Sports Illustrated?

FITCH
(gracious)
A woman... Good afternoon. How are
you?

MARLEE
I'm fine. How are you?

FITCH
Intrigued...

MARLEE
Tracing away, are you, Rankin?

Fitch looks at Doyle, who whispers:

DOYLE
Pay phone. About fifteen miles away.

FITCH
What's your name?

MARLEE
Marlee.

FITCH
What a beautiful name. Where are we
heading with this?

MARLEE
Well, it's between you and Wendell.
Who gets the girl?

FITCH
You're doing this to Rohr too?

That got his interest. Marlee laughs. Outside the booth, a
YOUNG BOY kicks a SOCCER BALL around.

MARLEE

Tell Durwood Cable if he wants to
score points on Monday, get ready to
salute the flag.

And she hangs up. Marlee calls for the ball, the boy passes.
She controls it beautifully and shoots it back. Only a
college girl would play this well. After a few more shots,
she gets in her car and drives away.

INT. COURT - DAY

Nick looks sideways at his fellow jurors to see how they are
reacting.

CELESTE

I went out and shot it, out in the
country. It was fun. That night I
decided to clean it. I took out the
clip and laid it on the table, then I
started wiping the gun. When I'd done
that, I thought I'd check to see if
the barrel was clean. I held the gun
up and looked down it.

She stops. The whole courtroom is deathly silent.

CELESTE

And that was the last thing I remember.

ROHR

But the clip with all the bullets in
it was out of the gun, was it not?

CELESTE

Yes, but that didn't mean there wasn't
a bullet in the chamber.

Tears start down her face.

ROHR

Was there any indicator, any gauge,
any sign whatsoever anywhere on the
gun to show that there was or might be
a bullet in the chamber?

CELESTE

No!

And now she really starts to cry. Rohr turns to the Judge.

ROHR

It's four forty-five at the end of a
long Friday. May I suggest we resume
on Monday?

JUDGE HARKIN

Yes. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, may I remind you that you must not read press accounts of the trial, nor watch any television show which deals with this trial. And most importantly, you must not talk about this case to each other. Under any circumstances.

INT. CASINO - FRIDAY NIGHT

Nick and Jerry are playing craps.

NICK

When she started digging around in that scar, I thought I was gonna hurl. But what a thing, eh? You think the gun is empty and then...

JERRY

That's how it is with semiautomatics, everyone knows that.

NICK

I didn't.

Nick sees Poodle coming over.

NICK

Look. I brought you a present.

Jerry brightens considerably.

JERRY

Oh, bow wow wow...

POODLE

Somebody get me a drink! I gotta erase that image outta my life..

She points to the place where Celeste's scar was.

NICK

I was just saying to Jerry, I didn't know that about semiautomatics. Did you?

PHOEBE

No, I did not, but I tell you what, Nick, I know now and I'm not likely to forget!

They all laugh. Nick grabs a drink from a passing waiter. And sees Marlee watching him from a nearby BLACKJACK TABLE.

NICK

Look, I gotta make some phone calls.
You guys have a good time and maybe
I'll...

He looks past Jerry at something.

NICK

Say, Jerry, you seen those guys over
there before?

He nods at 2 MEN who turn quickly away and pretend to gamble.

JERRY

Christ, I hope it's not my wife. I'm
in the middle of a divorce.

NICK

Nah, more likely the gun companies.
They do this you know.

JERRY

They do?

NICK

Oh, yeah, so much at stake. I'll tell
you about it later.

He leaves. He walks past Marlee. She folds and follows.

Marlee follows Nick around a corner. He pushes through some
double doors and they enter A SERVICE CORRIDOR, darker, with
trash cans and supplies.

Nick grabs Marlee and kisses her passionately.

MARLEE

And hello to you too.

NICK

I miss you so much...

MARLEE

My God... you do... I told Fitch the
Pledge thing. You think you can pull
it off?

NICK

Yeah, yeah, I think so.

MARLEE

What are they like?

NICK

They're like people.

MARLEE

Be specific.

NICK

Marleeee... It could be at least another week until we get another chance...

MARLEE

That's what you said last time. Just give me *something*.

NICK

Dillon seems cool, Jerry I can work with, Stella's a little squirrely and always has a hangover, Angel believes whatever you tell her, Millie seems like a real sweet woman, Herrera's a tough guy, Herman's a stiff... I don't know, I just got there.

(beat)

What if I picked you up and sat you on top of these boxes here?

MARLEE

What if?

He does. She closes her eyes. He kisses her between her legs.

INT. JURY ROOM - MONDAY MORNING

A relaxed Nick and a devoted Angel distribute muffins and coffee to Herman Grimes and anyone else who'll take them.

EXT. COURT - DAY

Hoppy arrives to drop Millie off. 5 CHILDREN in the back of the car. Kisses all round. Hoppy drives off.

Jerry arrives, looking over his shoulder.

INT. JURY ROOM - DAY

Millie enters and then Jerry and then Poodle.

JERRY

On my goddamn life, I swear to God I was tailed all weekend.

(sotto voce to Nick)

Couldn't even fuck Poodle. We got freaked out.

(louder)

Why the hell would I be followed. Me of all people?

NICK

I'll bet it wasn't just you. I bet it was just you who noticed. These are pretty slick operators.

RIKKI

Who? -

Everyone's listening now.

NICK

The gun companies. Look at it from their point of view. If they lose they're going to have to pay out maybe hundreds of millions.

RIKKI

I still don't get it.

NICK

Who makes that decision about how much they have to pay? We do. So, anything they can get on us, they will.

He has everyone's attention now.

NICK

You know what I think?

JERRY

What?

NICK

I think we should send out a message that we don't intend to get pushed around, that we intend to remain free and independent and patriotic.

The other jurors stare at him blankly.

INT. COURT - MONDAY MORNING

Fitch and Doyle sit in court like an old married couple.

FITCH

Is there really nothing you can do about your breath, Doyle?

DOYLE

I could retire.

FITCH

It's unbelievable. Anything on Jerry Fernandez?

DOYLE

I'll get you a report once I've bathed
my ulcerated stomach in perfume.

FITCH

Good. Oliver?

OLIVER

Yes.

FITCH

Gonna take care of that brief case
today?

OLIVER

Yes, sir, I am.

FITCH

Well, make sure you catch this.

The jury is filing in. Fitch watches them intently. Just
before they are about to sit down, each member puts hand to
heart and, facing the large American flag over the bench,
starts to recite the PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

JURY

I pledge allegiance to the flag and...

Fitch's Team, forewarned, leap to their feet to join in.

FITCH

Un-fucking-believable.

Nick watches him leave - and allows himself a little smile.

SAME PLACE - LATER

Celeste is back on the stand.

CELESTE

I was in the hospital for six months
and then when I came home, I had to
learn everything again. I couldn't
even brush my teeth...

EXT. HOPPY DUPREE'S REAL ESTATE OFFICE - SATURDAY

Camera focuses on the peeling letters of the window.

WOMAN (O.S.)

A deal like this is so large just a
sniff of it changes the local economy.
And the first thing it changes, of
course, is the price of land.

INT. HOPPY DUPREE'S REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY

Hoppy stares forward, mouth hanging open, nonplussed.

WOMAN (O.S.)

If we don't get a local man to do the purchase, the price'll go through the roof.

Hoppy looks at a LARGE MAP.

HOPPY

MGM Grand... it's incredible. What's my, er...

And now we see her, the ubiquitous, devious and, in her business suit, very fetching, AMANDA.

AMANDA

Cut?

HOPPY

Well...

AMANDA

If you don't pocket a million and a half, my name's not Prudence.

HOPPY

Prudence is a...

AMANDA

In this case it is a virtue... and it isn't. This land lies in the sixth district.

HOPPY

The county supervisor of the sixth district is Jimmy Hull Moke.

AMANDA

And we hear Jimmy Hull's a pretty tough cookie...

HOPPY

He's a very tough cookie - until you cross his palm with silver and then he melts like an ice cream in June.

AMANDA

And that would be your other function, Hoppy. To melt him for us.

HOPPY

Me? Personally?

AMANDA

Yes, you personally.

HOPPY

Gee, I don't know. I've always been a pretty straight arrow around these parts.-I have a reputation, standing in the community...

Amanda glances idly around the shabby office.

AMANDA

Yes, I can see you do. Oh, well... Can we at least count on your discretion?

HOPPY

Now hold on, Prudence... Hold on.

INT. FITCH'S HQ - DAY

Fitch isn't watching the trial - although it plays nearby. Instead he's watching and re-watching the PLEDGE, right up close to the screen, almost touching it. In his hand is a REMOTE CONTROL. Fitch runs the tape back... forward... stops it... back... at half speed. Amanda watches him.

Doyle enters.

DOYLE

Pancakes, O.J, bacon, coffee, and a bagel.

FITCH

What the fuck are you talking about?

DOYLE

"What Jerry Fernandez had for breakfast July 1st, 1989." And just about every other...

FITCH

It's not him.

DOYLE

What?

FITCH

It's not Jerry. Look.

The tape goes back.

FITCH

Watch Jerry when they come in....

In they come - and it's not just Jerry, it's all of them. They all look to Nick for their cue.

The Pledge starts. Fitch FAST FORWARDS. Slows it down again as the jury sits.

FITCH
Now watch. Remember right after they
sat down, I left?

DOYLE
Yeah.

FITCH
Watch.

And there it is. Nick turns his head, watching someone leave the court - and allows himself a little smile.

DOYLE
July 1st, 1989?

FITCH
And worse.

The phone rings. Fitch lets it ring. Doyle activates the necessary equipment. Fitch picks up.

FITCH
Hello.

EXT. BAR - MONDAY (INTERCUT)

Marlee is on a patio of a yuppie bar. She's calling from a cell phone.

MARLEE
Hello, Rankin.

FITCH
Hello, Marlee. How are you?

MARLEE
Oh, I'm fine. So, how'd you like my
patriotic little puppet show?

FITCH
I'm impressed, Marlee. Who's a clever
girl? But what does it mean, really?

MARLEE
It means I can make 'em dance to my
tune. It means I have the power.

FITCH
Yes, but how much power and how much
do you want for it?

MARLEE
A great deal and a great deal.

FITCH
Sounds like a terrible deal to me.

MARLEE
Okay, I'll bump one by Friday. See how
you like that.

FITCH
(startled)
Which one?

But Marlee hangs up. Now she gives the phone she borrowed
back to a BOY YUPPIE at the bar.

INT. FITCH'S HQ - EVENING

Fitch looks at Doyle.

FITCH
First she was fucking with the twelve
headed monster, now she's going to cut
off one of its heads. I love her...

INT. COURT - DAY

Nick and Co watch Celeste now on cross.

CABLE
You bought your gun from a licensed
dealer, am I correct?

CELESTE
Yes.

CABLE
Did he show you how it worked?

CELESTE
I shot it a couple of times on a range
out the back.

CABLE
And then you took it home?

CELESTE
Yes.

CABLE
With its instruction booklet?

CELESTE
Yes, but...

CABLE
But what?

CELESTE

Well, after the man in the shop had shown me how to use it... it seemed so simple.

INT. NICK'S PLACE - DAY

STANTON, an operative of Fitch's seen now and then in the background of Fitch's office, breaks into Nick's place. Behind him comes FRED, a COMPUTER EXPERT.

CABLE (O.S.)

"It seemed so simple." In other words you didn't bother to read the literature that accompanied this item?

As Stanton, who has a very LONG NOSE and a distinctive MANE OF GREY HAIR, snoops around in the old fashioned way, Fred downloads Nick's hard drive onto a laptop of his own.

CELESTE (O.S.)

I glanced through it.

Stanton thinks he hears something. He goes to an AIR VENT and peers into it. Sees nothing, walks away. The SHOT moves in through the SLATS of the vent. A LENS glimmers. A small ELECTRIC MOTOR whirs. The lens moves, following Stanton.

INT. STELLA HULIC'S HOUSE - DAY

A knife pokes up and shoves a window catch. The catch opens.

CABLE (O.S.)

You felt no *personal responsibility* to fully acquaint yourself with this item which you had bought, as you earlier testified, precisely because it was capable of causing harm?

Marlee climbs in. Walks to living room. On the mantle are framed pictures of Stella and her husband, CAL, a big man often seen with fish and game hanging from his arm.

CELESTE (O.S.)

I...

Marlee takes out a large cigar, lights it, PUFFS it to life, and puts it on the mantelpiece.

INT. COURT - DAY

Cable waits.

CABLE

Am I right, Mrs. Wood? I mean, if you buy something potentially lethal, isn't it your duty to check it out?

Celeste has gone silent, a tear trickling down her cheek.

CABLE

Your Honor, I have no further questions for this unfortunate lady. Mrs. Woods, I am terribly sorry for all you've been through. We all are.

JUDGE HARKIN

I'm going to recess early and we can start afresh in the morning.

INT. STELLA HULIC'S HOUSE - DAY

The cigar resting on the mantelpiece has burned down an inch. Marlee, wearing rubber gloves, dials from STELLA'S CORDLESS.

MARLEE

Hello, is this Stud-Talk?... Hi...
Ooh, yes, baby, tell me, tell me...

She picks up the cigar, puffs it back to life, and walks into the MASTER BEDROOM.

INT. STELLA HULIC'S CAR - DAY

Stella makes a right. She's in a residential neighborhood now.

INT. STELLA HULIC'S HOUSE - DAY

ANGLE ON THE PHONE:

PHONE SEX MAN

... now I'm pulling down your panties,
now I'm licking my index finger. Can
you hear me licking?... Hello? Hello?

Marlee straightens the bed out, puts the cigar back in her mouth and now the phone back to her ear.

MARLEE

No, you're doing fine... Don't be so insecure, just keep at it.

She strolls toward the front door.

MARLEE

Mmmm, up my ass... But only one?

She's almost at the front door when IT STARTS TO OPEN! Marlee drops the phone and runs back into the house. Stella enters. Sees the phone on the floor. Picks it up. Listens.

STELLA

What?! Are you insane?

She throws the phone aside in disgust. Sniffs. *Cigars?!?*

STELLA

What the hell is going on here? Cal?
CAL!?

Silence. Stella reaches inside a drawer of a nearby bureau and takes out A SEMIAUTOMATIC. Prowls deeper into the house.

Marlee struggles with the back door, trying to get out. No. Too many locks!

Stella enters the living room. Even more cigar smoke. She reaches inside a DESK DRAWER. Takes out ANOTHER GUN!!!

Marlee goes to the LAUNDRY ROOM window through which she entered. She wriggles through. Falls out of sight. The window shuts with a light bang.

Stella enters the room. Both guns are shaking violently.

INT. NICK'S PLACE - DAY

Nick opens the door to his apartment. He goes to the window and looks out through the blind. There's a MAN out there in a car. Watching.

Nick goes to his computer. Switches it on. Taps a lot of keys. And brings up a screen. "Surveillance Systems". Underneath is a message:

"UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY: 2:52."

Nick goes very still. Now he looks around. Nothing stolen. He taps some more keys. A VIRTUAL TAPE-DECK appears on screen. Nick presses REWIND. The TIME-CODE scrolls back to 2:52. Nick presses PLAY.

And there they are, STANTON and FRED. At work.

Nick sits back in his chair, shocked, and watches. After a while, Stanton comes over and seems to look right into the CAMERA. This is not a face Nick is going to forget.

INT. STELLA HULIC'S HOUSE. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stella, now very drunk and in a terrifying PINK NIGHTIE, and Cal in traditional PJs, fight as they prepare for bed.

STELLA

If I was seeing some cigar-smoking
guy, why in the hell would I call you
and tell you to come home early?!!?

CAL

I don't know. I don't get it.

He too has had some drinks.

STELLA

You don't get it because you're a great big dumb lox! I told you. The gun companies are...

CAL

Stella... this is America, okay? Okay? And in the good ol' U.S. of A...

The phone rings. Stella jumps. Cal picks it up.

CAL

Yes?

MARLEE (O.S.)

You have a nice living room.

CAL

What do you want?

MARLEE (O.S.)

We're watching you.

Cal signals to Stella. They go to the window and look out. There's many cars out there. Who knows?

STELLA

(hissing)

That one!

Cal hushes her with his hand.

CAL

Whose side are you on?

MARLEE (O.S.)

Smith and Wesson, you dick, and your wife better be too.

Click. Cal stares at it. Finds his courage.

CAL

Fuck you. Okay. Fuck you.

He throws the phone onto a chair.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT

Marlee is out on the street. Her CELL PHONE rings.

MARLEE

Nick? I thought we agreed only to...

(shocked)

Okay. Okay...

She hangs up.

INT. STELLA HULIC'S HOUSE. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cal and Stella stand by the bed.

CAL

Stella, we are going to bed. We are not going to be intimidated. Okay?

STELLA

Okay.

They start getting into bed, but their feet won't go down beyond a certain point.

They recoil drunkenly. Cal whips back the covers and cries out in alarm:

CAL

My God, we've been double-sheeted!
What the fuck does that mean?

EXT. REAR OF NICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nick drops out of his window and falls into a small garden. Another garden joins it, end to end. Nick climbs over a wall and walks along a path leading to the next street.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS. 44 CLUB - NIGHT

Nick heads across the street toward the club.

INT. 44 CLUB - NIGHT

A Zydeco Band plays. Nick sits down next to Marlee in a dark corner.

MARLEE

You weren't followed, were you?

NICK

No.

MARLEE

Are you sure?

NICK

Yes, I'm sure. They've put a guy on me though, he followed me home and then sat there. They're definitely onto me.

MARLEE

How?

NICK

I don't know. Maybe they asked Jerry who gave him the magazine or maybe...
I don't know.

MARLEE
There's nothing on there, is there?

NICK
On the hard drive?

MARLEE
Yeah.

Nick hesitates.

NICK
No.

MARLEE
'Cause if they find out who you are
and then they find out who I am and
then they go to my hometown... we're
finished.

NICK
I know, I know. There's nothing on
there... Nothing they could... I don't
think.

MARLEE
(hard)
What's on there, Nick?

NICK
That wouldn't self-destruct before
they got to it? Some poems.

Marlee sits back and looks at him.

MARLEE
Some poems?

NICK
Yeah, it's how I keep... you know if
I get lonely.

MARLEE
What, like, "My name's not really
Nick, I am a total dick, My girlfriend
is from Kansas, and her real name
is..."

NICK
Don't do this, Marlee.

She shuts up.

NICK
Even if they could break all the codes
there's nothing on there that could be
useful to them...

MARLEE

I hope you're right, Nick, 'cause these are not fools. Fitch is not a fool.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS. 44 CLUB - NIGHT

Nick and Marlee exit cautiously together. She looks around.

MARLEE

Okay. See you later.

She gives him a distracted kiss on the cheek and walks off.

NICK

I'm sorry.

She waves dismissively over her shoulder and keeps walking. Then she turns and comes back.

MARLEE

Can I ask you something?

NICK

Sure.

MARLEE

Were any of the poems about me?

NICK

They were all about you. And how I love you more than anything else on earth.

He smiles. They kiss more passionately.

NICK

Look, how about we slide into this alleyway here? It could be... I don't know... a long time until we get another chance.

She cannot refuse.

INT. COURT - FRIDAY

Rohr presents his first EXPERT WITNESS.

MARKETING EXPERT

The intent of all the advertising of guns to women is unquestionably to give an impression of a world that is far more dangerous than it is which can be fought off by a gun that is far safer than it is.

Nick glances sideways at Stella, who sits right next to him. She looks green. Now she takes a bottle of "water" and drinks it. Nick sniffs. Water?... or vodka.

INT. FITCH'S HQ - DAY

A hive of activity. COMPUTER HACKERS hack. VOICE ANALYSTS analyze: Nick's voice from his answering machine, Marlee's from conversations with Fitch.

Fitch comes up behind one of the HACKERS and looks at a computer screen. NUMBERS dancing. Doyle joins him.

FITCH
What's happening?

HACKER
We're running code on one of...

Suddenly the NUMBERS STOP. For a second, there's a list of NAMES AND ADDRESSES. Then - zing! - it's gone.

HACKER
Damn! He's got a self-destruct thing in here.

FITCH
What was that? Did you see that?

DOYLE
It was names and addresses.

HACKER
Thousands of them by the size of the file.

FITCH
And it's gone?

HACKER
Yeah, that one is... but there's another file in here, smaller. I'll try a different way in.

FITCH
(sardonic)
Yes... good idea.
(to Voice Expert)
What about you? What have you got?

VOICE EXPERT
I'm saying he's originally from West Texas and she's from... Missouri... or Kansas.

Amanda hangs up the phone.

AMANDA

Just checked with Hoppy. He's meeting with Moke Saturday night.

FITCH

Good.

He turns and studies the JURY on the big screen.

FITCH

Christ, that Stella Hulich looks rough.

The CASE FALLS ON ITS SIDE. Now we see the EXPERT WITNESS on cross from CABLE.

FITCH

God damn that boy!

He storms out. Seeming to lie on his side, Cable asks:

CABLE

So, if there's a shot of a car speeding down a winding road and the ad says, "Ford - The Absolute Freedom Of The Road" - does that mean I can drive as fast as I like along any country road on any side I wish?

INT. COURT - DAY

Nick turns his head and examines Stella again. She belches.

CABLE

To some extent or another, isn't it true that I have to interpret almost all advertisements?

MARKETING EXPERT

Yes.

CABLE

Use my judgement as to what's poetic and what's informational?

MARKETING EXPERT

Yes, but...

CABLE

No further questions.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Nick sits opposite the judge.

JUDGE HARKIN

Lou said you wanted to see me. What can I do for you?

NICK

I felt I had to share something with you. It's about Stella.

Judge Harkin sits forward, interested.

JUDGE HARKIN

What's wrong with her?

NICK

She thinks she's being followed - a number of the jurors do - you might speak to Jerry, for example - but the thing is with Stella she's a wreck. She reeked of booze when she came in this morning - vodka, I'd say - and she's been drinking ever since.

JUDGE HARKIN

Oh, dear...

INT. COURT - DAY

The court has been cleared of all but the judge, the lawyers, and Stella at the bench. Judge Harkin leans down to sniff as Stella blows air out of her mouth.

JUDGE HARKIN

Good God... Mrs. Hulic, I think an explanation is in order. You're drunk.

STELLA

You'd be drunk if you'd been through what I've been through! They broke into my house! They smoked cigars! I pick up the phone and one of them threatens to stick *two fingers* up my rectum! Not one, *two*!

Fitch and Doyle are having a hard time not laughing.

JUDGE HARKIN

Do you have any idea who's doing this?

Fitch and Doyle flinch like guilty schoolboys as Stella points in their general direction.

STELLA

The gun people! They said as much on the phone! And then... And then...

JUDGE HARKIN

Yes? Then what?

STELLA

(bursting into tears)
They double-sheeted us!

JUDGE HARKIN

What!?

STELLA

They double-sheeted us! They turned down the sheets so our feet wouldn't go all-the way down!!!

SAME PLACE - ANOTHER ANGLE - ON NICK

The jury is back.

JUDGE HARKIN (O.S.)

... Mrs. Hulic has been excused from the jury for personal reasons...

Nick glances at Fitch and actually has the audacity to smirk!

JUDGE HARKIN

As you can see, she's been replaced by alternate number one, Phillip Savelle.

Fitch is *lipless* with anger. A Republican drunk married to a hunter has been replaced by a *tree surgeon and glass blower!*?

JUDGE HARKIN

Now, I have some other bad news. Mrs. Hulic and another juror claim they've been followed. This kind of thing, which verges on intimidation, is, of course, illegal and I won't stand for it. However, as I don't know who is doing it, I only have one option. I'm going to sequester you for the duration of the trial. I'm sorry.

There are gasps and groans. Nick looks at angry Fitch and... My God, he winks! Fitch turns and walks out.

INT. FITCH'S HQ - DAY

Fitch is working intently on a computer, tapping the DOWN ARROW KEY. At the top of the screen are the words: "Jury Pool - Cincinnati." A series of FACES scroll down. Some are obviously covert photographs, others from yearbooks, etc.

Suddenly Fitch stops. A FACE stares back at him. A bearded youth with long blond hair.

FITCH

My God.

DOYLE

What?

FITCH

I thought so. Look at this.

DOYLE

What?

FITCH

Look! It's a prospective juror from that case in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

DOYLE

Was that the one where the city sued and asked for \$500,000 for the cost of washing blood off the streets?

FITCH

Among other things, yes, but look, Doyle. *Look!*

DOYLE

I'm looking. I'm... *Good God.* It's Nick Easter!

FITCH

Only here he's called David Lancaster.

DOYLE

What we saw on his hard drive?

FITCH

Electoral rolls.

DOYLE

They hack into the electoral rolls and put him in there?

HACKER

Could be. You could do it.

FITCH

I'm willing to bet we're going to find a couple of other cases where Nick tried to get on the jury.

DOYLE

Jesus...

FITCH

They've been stalking us, Doyle, one trial after another. And now he's in.

The phone rings. Fitch picks up without waiting for Desperate Doyle to get his tracing act together. He listens.

FITCH

You have my full attention, Marlee. Stella was one of mine.

EXT. LONELY BEACH AREA - DAY (INTERCUT)

Marlee on a pay phone. A new bleakness to the image.

MARLEE

No, she was one of mine. They all are, Fitch,--and you better get hip to it fast or I'll sell them to Rohr.

FITCH

Give me your terms so I can take them upstairs.

MARLEE

I think it's time to meet.

FITCH

(almost seductive)
Marlee... How very exciting.

MARLEE

Isn't it. But you fuck with me, I'll pull the rug out from under you so fast you'll be picking splinters out of your ass for a decade. You're at The St. Regis, right?

FITCH

Saturated with old world charm - and absolutely prickling with splinters.

MARLEE

Meet you downstairs for dinner at 8.

FITCH

My heart is in my mouth.

MARLEE

Well, it's a small little heart from all accounts, so you should be able to shove some food around it.

She makes a kissing noise and hangs up. Fitch smiles, almost relaxed for once.

FITCH

(to Doyle)

You know, Doyle, I don't know why you bother with all that tracing nonsense. It never works.

INT. COURT - FRIDAY

The new seating arrangement puts Nick next to Millie with Angel on the other side. Rohr has another EXPERT WITNESS on the stand, an efficient woman named, SARAH BOYLES.

SARAH BOYLES

Could there be such a thing as a "safer" pistol? Of course. Triggers could offer more resistance. Trigger locks could be sold with every gun. And semiautomatics could - some already do - have an indicator showing if there's a bullet in the chamber or a system by which the gun won't fire if the magazine's not in. Safer? You bet.

ROHR

Is it your impression that some of this technology is being suppressed?

SARAH BOYLES

The technology for a smart gun exists. Fingerprint recognition. But if the manufacturers admit there's such a thing as a "smart" gun that makes them liable for the 240 million "dumb" guns they already sold.

CABLE

Objection. Argumentative. Outside the scope of the witness!

JUDGE HARKIN

Sustained.

INT. ST. REGIS HOTEL - DAY

Marlee checks the dining room. Big gallery all the way around the second floor. Now she sees a man - Doyle, in fact - who's looking at the place with a similar eye.

Marlee slides away.

INT. FITCH'S HQ - DAY

Fitch finds another PHOTOGRAPH of a man from another trial, this time with close-cut hair, goatee and suit. Nick again...

HACKER (O.S.)

We're in!

FITCH

What? What's there?

HACKER

Poems.

FITCH

What?

HACKER

Poems.

Fitch and Doyle now look over his shoulder at the screen as the Hacker scrolls down. There's at least a dozen poems.

INT. JURY ROOM-- DAY

The jurors file in, already talking. The ever solicitous Nick, guides Grimes with one hand and makes sure Millie is taken care of with the other.

RIKKI

So, what does it mean that he "rests"?

SHINE ROYCE

Well, it's the weekend...

NICK

It means that Wendell Rohr, lawyer for Celeste Wood, has put on all his witnesses. Now the defense will put on their witnesses.

HERRERA

And then do we get to vote on this stupid thing?

NICK

No. Then Wendell Rohr makes a closing argument for the widow and Durwood Cable makes one for the gun companies.

GRIMES

And then we get the case.

NICK

(respectfully)

After the judge's instructions.

Everyone starts to get ready to leave.

NICK

Listen up, everyone. I want to ask you all a favor. I just came into some money from an uncle of mine who passed away. Now Uncle Gus was a real bon vivant, loved to go out and drink and eat, and in the will, he wrote...

Nick takes out a piece of paper and reads.

NICK

"The first day you get this money, I want you to take 1000 of it and go out to dinner with a big gang of friends and raise a glass to your ever lovin' Uncle Gus."

Nick pauses, as if he can't go on, but recovers.

NICK

That's the way he was. But the trouble is I'm new in town and I don't know anyone and I wondered...

Many a sympathetic face, several nods, but a couple of awkward looks too.

NICK

This'll be the last good food you'll get in a while. Bring your families, let's get to know each other! We'll go to the St. Regis, how's that?

What a grin this boy has. How could anyone resist him?

INT. FITCH'S HOTEL ROOM - SATURDAY EVENING

Fitch stands before his dressing room mirror. He has chosen and re-chosen his wardrobe and now only wishes he was 20 pounds lighter and a similar number of years younger.

DOYLE (O.S.)

You look gorgeous.

FITCH

Thank you. You don't.

Doyle lies on the bed, reading Nick's poems and eating Fitch's on-the-pillow mint. Fitch turns.

FITCH

You ate my chocolate mint?

DOYLE

Christ, I wasn't thinking. I forgot I was on a diet.

Fitch stares at him and says nothing. Diet? You?

DOYLE

I just eat natural products. I don't understand why I'm not shedding.

FITCH

Perhaps it has something to do with the quantities of natural products you eat. A bag of peanuts - and I've often seen you knock back ten to fifteen in a day - is the equivalent of a steak.

DOYLE

You mean I could eat ten to fifteen steaks a day and...

FITCH

Basically you are eating ten to fifteen steaks a day, which is why you're such an egregiously bloated individual...

(checks watch)

Now get off my bed and give me those poems. I'm going down.

A GLASS OF WHISKEY

proceeds across an open space...

INT. ST. REGIS DINING ROOM - SATURDAY NIGHT

... past a table where Nick lavishly entertains, past another where Oliver and Amanda, both with hidden CAMERAS, dine - all this watched by Doyle up on the gallery - and arrives at Fitch's table, where Fitch sits alone.

WAITER

(reading)

"One glass of Glenfiddich Special Reserve Authentic Highland Single Malt Whiskey, distilled and bottled in Dufftown, Banffshire, Scotland, home to the smoothest richest Scotch whiskeys in the world. Enjoy. Marlee."

FITCH

(tightly)

And where is the lady?

WAITER

It was a telephone order.

Fitch checks his watch. 8.35. He looks at Nick's table.

Nick entertains Jerry, Poodle, Dillon, alternate, Shine Royce, Loreen Duke with husband and two sons, Angel Weese and gangsta boyfriend, and Millie with her husband, Hoppy. It's an odd gang, but Nick makes it work. Millie has obviously taken on the role of mother. Nick glances at Fitch and smiles.

As if in retaliation, Fitch takes out the poems and lays them on the table. Nick goes still a moment, wondering... Fitch

tries to concentrate, but his eyes keep flicking over to the glass of whiskey. How deep the hue, how... A HAND takes it.

DOYLE

Hey, Rankin, how you been? Just dropped by to say hello.

Doyle quickly knocks back the drink, disposing of it.

FITCH

You are not my mother.

DOYLE

Ah, but I am. Well, good to see you again. See you later.

He leaves. Fitch looks down at the empty glass then back at Nick's table. Then decides to really study one of the poems.

"Maria"

*Maria, with your bells, mother of mine,
Saintly Maria, of deep and quiet grace,
Maria of the plains, who rings so wide.
Maria, mother by choice, mother divine.*

FITCH

Maria of the plains...

SAME PLACE - LATER

Fitch has been through the poems and now comes back to the first one. He has underlined the words, *BELLS*, *SAINTLY MARIA*, *PLAINS*, and *MOTHER BY CHOICE*. He looks up and sees Nick accompanying his guests out. Fitch throws down his napkin, irritated, and heads for his room.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Fitch plods along, gloomy now, angry. Opens his door.

INT. FITCH'S ROOM - SATURDAY NIGHT

A MAID has turned down the bed, a large, heavy 4-poster, and now puts another chocolate mint on the pillow.

FITCH

Get out.

MAID

You sure about that?

FITCH

What did you say?

He turns. It's Marlee, who has just finished the bed.

MARLEE

How was the whiskey?

Fitch smiles.

MARLEE

You thought I'd go down there with all that surveillance? The meathead on the gallery, the yuppies on the floor? What do you take me for?

FITCH

An extortionist. What are you going to take me for?

He moves toward her, a little menacing. But before he gets too close, Marlee produces A GUN and smiles over it at Fitch.

MARLEE

This handgun is one of the most incompetently made handguns in the world. It's a Lady Auto GT-Tech, which, as you know, tends to go off unexpectedly...

Fitch backs off, hands up, but with comedy.

FITCH

Our handwriting expert said you had a shaky hand, wound a little too tight, I see what he means...

MARLEE

Brilliant, Fitch, except I didn't write that note. So there: betrayed by a woman once more...

FITCH

You seem to know a lot about me.

MARLEE

I do.

FITCH

Of course, I know a fair bit about you too, Marlee. Poetry... oh, boy, oh boy. And not just you. I should have Nick's luck with woman. My God...

Fitch sees he's found a small vulnerable spot.

FITCH

But let's not dwell on that, let's talk about the trial. How are we doing?

MARLEE

You need nine votes for a verdict.
Anything less hangs the jury and you
get a mistrial.

FITCH

Really? I had no idea.

He has thrown her. How gratifying.

MARLEE

But you don't want just nine votes, do
you? You want a unanimous verdict
that'll shut this kind of litigation
down for a decade. Am I right?

FITCH

We dream...

MARLEE

Nick can swing it either way.

FITCH

Either way, huh? I guess that mean's
he's got Angel in his front pocket and
Dillon in the rear?

MARLEE

From you, we want cash. From Rohr
we're asking a percentage of the
damages.

FITCH

You're already talking to Rohr?

Now she's rattled him.

MARLEE

We're waiting for the best offer. If
we decide to throw it Rohr's way,
needless to say we'll be looking for
the largest possible settlement from
which to take our slice.

FITCH

What a mercenary young lady you are.

MARLEE

It's what makes me dependable.

FITCH

So, how does a hundred thousand
dollars sound to you?

MARLEE

Laughable. Sit on the bed.

He does. She snaps a HANDCUFF to his wrist and to the bed

FITCH

Marlee... in my wildest masochistic
lawyer dreams I never thought we'd
move so fast...

— (beat)

Does Nick know we're doing this? Or is
the relationship only open on one
side?

Marlee has placed the KEY about 5 feet from the bed. At this
last remark, she moves it so it's 6 feet away. She returns.

MARLEE

If we're to get into bed together,
Fitch, you're going to have to learn
to show a little bit more respect.

FITCH

Oh, you've no idea how much I respect
you...

MARLEE

You have Nick's poems, but we have
tape of Mr. Meathead breaking into his
apartment and downloading them. If we
really don't like the way things go,
we'll produce the tape and send you to
jail. We don't underestimate you.
You'd be advised not to underestimate
us. Come up with a better offer fast.

She turns and walks toward the door.

FITCH

Is Maria still alive?

MARLEE

Who?

FITCH

His mother?

Marlee frowns. No idea what he's talking about.

MARLEE

If you wanna go fishing, fish in the
Gulf, Rankin. I'll be calling.

She exits. Fitch's seductive good humor vanishes. He flings
himself toward the key. Stretches for it. It's three inches
beyond his grasp. Had he not made the quip about the "open
relationship" he'd be able to reach it.

After only five seconds of struggle, he sits back down on the
bed and pulls out his CELL PHONE.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Marlee walks through a service entrance, the doors swing, she comes out again, but no longer a maid.

INT. ST. REGIS DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Doyle's phone rings. He picks up. Listens. Looks around. A flash of Marlee heading down the back stairs. He follows.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Marlee hurries over to her car. Doyle comes out of the hotel. He sees her but pretends not to. As soon as she disappears around the corner, he rushes to his own car, gets in, follows.

INT. FITCH'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Fitch remains on the phone to Doyle.

FITCH

Can you see her?

INT. DOYLE'S CAR - NIGHT (INTERCUT)

Doyle peers forward.

DOYLE

Yeah, I can see her.

FITCH

Well, don't let her see you. Find out where she lives. And then come back here as soon as you can. I drank a lot of coffee today and she handcuffed me to the bed.

DOYLE

I've told you: you're too high strung for coffee. It just...

FITCH

Shut up.

He puts down the phone. Sees the CHOCOLATE MINT on the pillow. Reaches for it. Like the key, it's just out of reach.

INT. MARLEE'S CAR - NIGHT

Marlee looks in her rearview mirror and sees a car jump a red light. She takes out her cell phone and dials 911.

MARLEE

Hello, yes, I'm in a car and I'm being followed. I wonder if you could help me...

INT. COP CAR - NIGHT

Parked just off Burlingame. Two COPS, a man and a woman.

RADIO

We have a suspect being tailed on
Burlingame Avenue. She's heading west
in a tan Corolla and she thinks the
car that's following her is a black
Ford Explorer.

The cops see Marlee go by... and then Doyle. They pull out
but keep way, way back.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT

A procession. Marlee now pulls into a gas station.

INT. COP CAR - NIGHT

The two cops see Doyle pull over too.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

The cops SCREECH to a halt, blocking Doyle. Now they jump out
and brace him.

MALE COP

Keep your hands on the wheel!

Doyle turns and looks at him with deep contempt.

INT. MARLEE'S CAR - NIGHT

Marlee watches the cops talking to Doyle. Now the FEMALE COP,
a hefty bull dyke, comes over.

COP

He says he saw you driving, just took
a "fancy" to you, didn't mean any
harm. Whadaya wanna do?

MARLEE

What's his name?

COP

Sean Doyle. He's from out of town.

MARLEE

Can you keep him there for five
minutes, give me a chance to get away?

COP

Sure, honey.

MARLEE

And maybe... would you... slap him
around a bit?

COP

Ma'am...

— (a smile)

... we're here to serve.

She winks and heads off toward Doyle.

INT. FITCH'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Fitch is working on Nick's poems when Doyle is eventually let
in by a SECURITY MAN.

Doyle's top button has been ripped off his shirt and there's
a graze down one side of his face. He limps over to the bed.

FITCH

I guess we'd have to give her the
first round, wouldn't we?

DOYLE

Yes, we fucking would.

FITCH

Key's over there.

Doyle picks up the KEY, gives it to Fitch, goes to the head
of the bed and starts unwrapping the chocolate mint. Too
late, Fitch looks up from unlocking the cuffs.

FITCH

What do you think you're doing?

Doyle pops the mint in his mouth and stares at Fitch
balefully as he chews.

FITCH

You're beginning to get on my nerves.

DOYLE

This whole town's beginning to get on
my nerves.

FITCH

Good, then you'll be happy to learn
I'm sending you off to the plains of
West Texas. "Saintly Maria" is not a
woman, she's an orphanage.

INT. BRANNIGANS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Hoppy faces JIMMY HULL MOKE, a scurrilous looking individual
in jeans and cowboy boots.

Stanton, the man with long grey hair who broke into Nick's place, sits nearby with one of the seeing-eye briefcases.

HOPPY

I can't divulge the name of the development company at this point.

MOKE

Well, whatever their name is, the planning commission'll put up a fight.

HOPPY

We expected that.

MOKE

Of course, the supervisors make the final decision. The recommendations from zoning and planning are merely advisory. Bottom line is the six of us do whatever we want.

He snickers.

HOPPY

I know how things work, Jimmy...

MOKE

Yeah? Is it true you sell fruitcakes for the Rotary Club at Christmas?

In other words, why are you doing this? Is there a trick?

HOPPY

I do, yes. I also have five children who'll be wanting to go to college...

MOKE

I'm lucky. My son dropped out of High School...

(another laugh)

But he's a very bright boy, none the less. Knows the lay of the land, as they say.

HOPPY

(innocently)

He owns a pair of gravel trucks, right?

MOKE

A hobby. What he really does is he consults on projects like this.

HOPPY

Ah ha! I see! My clients would love to work with your son. How much would he charge for something like this?

MOKE

A hundred thousand.

HOPPY

Gotcha. I'll pass it on.

(smiles)

Funny, -it's not as hard as I thought
it would be.

Moke laughs and reaches over to tweak Hoppy's cheek. What a character... And the briefcase rolls on...

INT. MARLEE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Marlee lies on the bed in silk pajamas. Sensitive viewers will rightly surmise she's thinking about Fitch's remark. "I should have Nick's luck with women..." She brings her doubts and fears to a stop and picks up the phone.

INT. FITCH'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT (INTERCUT)

Fitch, also in silk pajamas, is about to get into bed. Phone.

FITCH

Hello.

MARLEE

Did Sean "The Stalker" Doyle come by
to set you free yet?

FITCH

Yes. He did.

MARLEE

So you have both hands free?

FITCH

I do.

MARLEE

Then you might want to hold onto your
butt. I just decided the price is ten
million.

Silence. Fitch is wondering if the call is being taped.

FITCH

For the sake of posterity, I'd have to
say I don't know what you're talking
about. But I should warn you that some
of the assholes I work for are pretty
volatile. I'll have to put it to them
diplomatically, face to face. Call me
tomorrow.

MARLEE

At the beach house?

FITCH
(shocked)
You have that number?

Marlee laughs and hangs up. Fitch sits at the head of the bed a moment, and then thrusts his legs into bed.

They stop. Marlee has performed another double-sheeting.

EXT. COURT - MONDAY

Jurors (with bags) are saying goodbye to loved ones. The most affectionate couple is Millie and her husband, Hoppy, now left with the five kids.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE JURY ROOM - MONDAY

By the time Nick arrives with two gym bags, Lou Dell and DEPUTY WILLIS, stand outside, having a confrontation with a knot of protesting jurors, chief among them Jerry Fernandez, Rikki Coleman, and Angel Weese.

NICK
Hey, hey, hey, what's going on?

JERRY
They want to search our bags.

MILLIE
And they say no phones in the rooms at the motel. I have five kids. They need to be able to reach me.

LOU
Judge's orders, Nick. We have to check no one has cell phones, no magazines that might...

NICK
What does he take us for? Terrorists.
Excuse me.

He barges past her and heads for the Judge's Chamber.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

The Judge is having breakfast when Nick knocks.

JUDGE HARKIN
Come in.

Nick enters.

NICK
I'm so sorry to disturb you, but we've got a little rebellion on our hands...

INT. JURY ROOM - DAY

Judge Harkin addresses the jurors. As he outlines the following from rough notes, see juror reactions of gratitude and relief as appropriate.

JUDGE HARKIN

Per Nick Easter's request: the bags will not be inspected. There will be phones in the rooms after all, though calls will be monitored. No magazines, but a daily newspaper will be delivered to each room with anything about the trial cut out. The TVs will be re-connected but we do ask you to avoid local news channels. A gym will be set up for those who like to work out, and beer will be provided for those who like to drink.

NICK

And I think we need to address the issue of conjugal visits...

JUDGE HARKIN

Well, Nick, what do you think would be appropriate?

JERRY

Once a day and twice on Saturdays.

NICK

Three times a week.

JUDGE HARKIN

Twice.

NICK

Okay. Unless the trial drags on.

JUDGE HARKIN

Anything else?

NICK

Herman?

GRIMES

No, that'll be all, your Honor.

As soon as Judge Harkin leaves, spontaneous applause for Nick bursts from all but two of the jurors, Grimes and Herrera.

INT. HOPPY'S HOUSE - DAY

Hoppy stuffs as many Pop-Tarts into the toaster as it will take as his kids rush around trying to get ready for school.

There's a ring at the door. Hoppy yells at a kid to watch the toaster and pumps his way over to the door.

Opens it. Stares at an FBI BADGE. Gasps. Almost faints. Looks over his shoulder. And then shuts the door behind himself so he's outside away from the kids.

TWO AGENTS stare at him coolly. Agents NITCHMAN and NAPIER.

NITCHMAN

Are you Hoppy Dupree?

HOPPY

Yes.

NAPIER

We'd like to ask you some questions.

HOPPY

What about?

NAPIER

About you and Jimmy Hull Moke.

HOPPY

Oh, my God.

NAPIER

May we come in?

HOPPY

No, please, not here, not in front of my children, please... How about my office in half an hour? Please.

The two men regard him for a short while. Then:

NAPIER

We'll be out here in our car. When you leave, we'll follow.

HOPPY

Thank you.

He re-enters his house, shuts the door, leans against it.

KID (O.S.)

Daddy! The pop-tarts are on fire!

Hoppy drags himself into the kitchen. Smoke. Noise. Spilled milk. Glorious, delicious family life - all too soon to be replaced by iron bars and butt-fucking gangbangers.

INT. COURT - DAY

Cable has his first witness on, PROFESSOR MATHER.

MATHER

As a statistician at the University of North Carolina, I've been looking at all these statistics from the anti-gun lobby for quite some time and really they're pretty weak once you really study-them.

INT. JURY ROOM - DAY

The CAMERA runs along the bags stacked in the jury room.

MATHER (O.S.)

They say, for example that "a gun kept in the house is 22 times more likely to end up killing someone you know than being used for self-protection." How do they know?

The CAMERA settles on a name tag: Millie Dupree. Inside the plastic cover is a cut out paper heart. Written on it is: "Miss You Already, Love You, Hoppy."

INT. COURT - DAY

MATHER

After all, if a gun is used to frighten someone away, who gets to hear about it?

Nick leans in to Angel to hear her reaction.

ANGEL

That's true.

INT. FITCH HQ - DAY

Fitch watches the proceeding on TV.

MATHER (O.S.)

I did a study which concluded that in fact guns were probably used upward of two and a half million times a year for self-defense...

On ANOTHER TV, tuned to LOCAL NEWS, reports come in of a "SHOOTING IN THE GARDEN DISTRICT."

FITCH

Jesus Christ, the fucking sh'theads don't make it easy for us.

AMANDA

What?

FITCH

You'd think at least they'd hold off
from killing each other until we'd won
'em the right to keep their guns...

AMANDA

What happened?

FITCH

Some prick just shot his wife, his
mother in law, and two of his kids. I
tell you this country...

EXT. SANTA MARIA ORPHANAGE. PLAINS OF WEST TEXAS - DAY

A Bell Tower rises up, bells ring out over the plains, and
Doyle drives in in his rental car.

INT. ORPHANAGE. MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Doyle speaks to the MOTHER SUPERIOR.

DOYLE

Hello. My name's David Donaldson. I
work for a Jury Consultant Firm. We
check the backgrounds of prospective
jurors in big cases.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

That must be very interesting work.
How can I help you?

Doyle takes out a photograph of Nick and shows it to her.

EXT. ORPHANAGE GARDENS - DAY

SISTER LUCY, an older nun, has just stopped working in the
garden with some orphans to look at the picture.

SISTER LUCY

Ah, yes, Jeff Kerr, what a fine young
man he's grown up to be.

DOYLE

Yes, hasn't he... What can you tell me
about him?

SISTER LUCY

He came here as a boy of two and left
a man of eighteen.

DOYLE

And what sort of a boy was he?

SISTER LUCY

Well, between coming here and leaving I think Jeff was adopted and returned three, maybe even four times. It's a sadly common thing. No fault of his.

DOYLE

And what does that do to a child?

SISTER LUCY

Well, they learn to expect rejection. Jeff was... well, shall we say, overly adaptable, perhaps a little too eager to please, but at the same time wary, ready to back away, to cut and run...

DOYLE

And where did he eventually run to?

SISTER LUCY

To law school. Lawrence, Kansas. He was very bright.

DOYLE

He still is, believe me...

INT. HOPPY DUPREE'S REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY

Hoppy sits behind his desk in tears.

HOPPY

You can't take me away now! My wife's in this trial. I'm looking after the kids!

NAPIER

Which trial?

HOPPY

The gun trial, that woman suing the gun company.

NITCHMAN

I beg your pardon?

NAPIER

Your wife is in the Celeste Wood case?

NITCHMAN

What is she? A lawyer? Which side is she on?

HOPPY

No, she's just a juror.

NITCHMAN

"Just" a juror! Jesus Christ, what do you think, Bill?

They look at each other. Can you believe this? Then:

NAPIER

There may just be a way out for you, Hoppy. Maybe...

INT. CAR - DAY

Doyle is on the phone.

DOYLE

His real name is Jeff Kerr and he went to law school in Lawrence, Kansas. I'm on my way there right now.

INT. FITCH'S CAR - DAY (INTERCUT)

Fitch on the phone.

FITCH

And I'm on my way to meet the assholes. She's put in for ten.

DOYLE

Million?

FITCH

No, cents. Yes, ten million.

DOYLE

That's a little salty.

FITCH

Yes, it is, which is why you've got to move fast on this.

DOYLE

I am.

FITCH

So, what did the nuns say about him?

DOYLE

They said he was "eager to please". One of 'em said he was always giving her little gifts out of the blue.

FITCH

A manipulative little cocksucker, just as I thought.

EXT. SIESTA MOTEL - MONDAY NIGHT

The manipulative little cocksucker is everywhere. Right now he's hauling Millie's heavy suitcase up the stairs. DEPUTY WILLIS is behind him with Rikki and Jerry.

NICK

So, Rikki, who likes to get up early and work out is right next to the bar and Jerry who likes to drink is right by the exercise room? What sense does that make?

DEPUTY WILLIS

Well...

NICK

Thank you.

(low to Jerry)

That puts your kennel right next to Poodle's. Lou?

LOU

Is this about breakfast?

NICK

Yes. We have to be alert all day. It's very important everyone gets the kind of breakfast that makes them feel good. Herman, for example, has to have his oatmeal...

INT. HOUSE BY SEA - NIGHT

Fitch looks at the ceiling as a battle rages around him.

JANKLE

I appreciate this was my gun and it's my company on trial, but are we really considering paying this bitch?

VANDEMEER

We must win. Period. Whatever it costs.

NRA

As far as the NRA is concerned, mandatory trigger locks are the thin end of the wedge. This girl is just the cost of doing business. Pay.

STUEBEN

Let's offer her five million.

JANKLE

But what's our guarantee?

FITCH

The only guarantee we have is that if we *don't* pay her, she'll swing it the other way. Then it could cost you not ten million but four hundred million.

JANKLE

Who the fuck are these people, Fitch!?

FITCH

I don't know, but if you want I can find out in a split second. I'll go to the police and tell them what's going on. That'll mean a mistrial and an investigation and we've already got our hands dirty. Then you'll have to pay for this trial again. And then there'll be more of them, other Celestes. But if she comes through for us, we shut Wendel Rohr down and...

A PHONE rings.

VANDEMEER

Five.

JANKLE

Four.

STUEBEN

Four and a quarter.

Fitch: Last chance? No? Okay. He activates a SPEAKERPHONE.

FITCH

Hello?

INT. MALL - NIGHT (INTERCUT)

Marlee is on a payphone. Among couples shopping and going to movies, she seems even lonelier than before.

MARLEE

So, are you with the assholes?

FITCH

(lying, with a wink
to the assholes)

No, I'm alone.

MARLEE

How'd you like my little joke with the sheets?

FITCH

I was tumbling around on the floor
laughing about it for *four and a*
quarter hours.

MARLEE

Only *four* and a quarter?

FITCH

It's all the body would stand.

Long silence.

MARLEE

I ask for ten and you come back at
four and a quarter?

FITCH

I'm afraid so.

MARLEE

Okay, now I *am* gonna take out one of
yours... and the price just went up to
twenty.

FITCH

You sure you don't want to consult
with Nick on this? I've a feeling he
might want to take it. He'd make so
many people happy and he's such an
eager to please sort of fella, isn't
he?

MARLEE

What do you mean by that?

FITCH

I'm beginning to feel I know him
better than you do. An orphan boy who
never wants to disappoint a soul...

Marlee is shocked. So they know about Nick. She says nothing.

FITCH

You think you've finally met someone
who understands you, don't you?

(beat)

Join the club.

MARLEE

What?

FITCH

You should read his poems, Marlee,
they'd break your heart.

And now he hangs up.

JANKLE

What the fuck did you just do?

FITCH

I hung up on her. I'm working her.
What did you want me to do? Haggle? I
thought you were against paying her
anything?

JANKLE

Yeah, but what do I know, I'm just one
of the assholes, right?

FITCH

Dry out, Jankle. Dry out.

And he leaves.

INT. SIESTA MOTEL - TUESDAY MORNING

Nick is first in the breakfast room. Next in is Herrera,
dressed in sweatpants and a sleeveless T-shirt.

NICK

Man, you're in *terrific* shape.

He touches one of his biceps. Herrera snatches his arm away.

HERRERA

You don't fool me, boy. I know what
you're up to.

NICK

Oh? What?

HERRERA

I know what you're doing. I was born
in Cuba!

He makes a snaking motion with his hand. Dillon enters but
remains unseen as:

HERRERA

Wiggle your way in... sneaking and
snaking... see what you can get out of
the situation. Leave me alone!

NICK

Wow, excuse me.

Herrera grabs a muffin and a glass of orange juice and leaves.

DILLON

Who put tabasco in his I.V.?

Nick laughs... Rikki enters, sweating.

NICK

Rikki! Looking great there! What can I get you?

Now in come Millie and Angel.

NICK

Millie! Sleep well? Good... And Angel, how did you sleep?

He puts his hand to his ear for "Like an Angel."

ANGEL

You're so funny!

NICK

Oh, I am, I am...

INT. COURT - TUESDAY

Professor Mather is on cross.

ROHR

How exactly did you arrive at this figure of two and a half million people using guns for self-defense?

MATHER

I sent out a survey to gun owners and asked them if they'd ever used their gun in self-defense in the last year.

ROHR

And?

MATHER

96 percent said they hadn't. 4 percent had. 4 percent of all the gun owners in America is two and a half million.

ROHR

A terrifying figure right off the bat. But did you interview that 4 percent?

MATHER

Two and a half million people? No, sir, just couldn't find the time.

ROHR

How many people were there in the entire survey?

MATHER

Eight hundred.

ROHR

I see... So in fact we're talking about 4 percent of 800. That's... 32 people is it not? Did you interview any of them?

MATHER

Oh, yes, here and there.

ROHR

How many?

MATHER

An estimate?

ROHR

An honest estimate under the oath.

MATHER

Perhaps nine.

ROHR

Where was this survey conducted?

MATHER

It was conducted in North Carolina.

ROHR

Where exactly in North Carolina?

MATHER

In the Appalachians. The Black Mountains.

ROHR

I see. So, from a figure of two and a half million bold Americans defending their homes we come down to...

(heinous milking)

... nine Black Mountain Appalachians.

Oh, I'll bet you heard some stories, I'll bet you did...

INT. SIESTA MOTEL - TUESDAY EVENING

Nick leans on the balcony and watches THE CONJUGAL VISITORS arrive.

Herrera takes a dignified Spanish woman to his room and ostentatiously leaves the door open. Angel's BOYFRIEND arrives and ostentatiously slams his door. Hoppy, looking shattered, ducks into Millie's room. Dillon glances along the rail at Nick. Nick retreats into his room - which is next to Angel's - and shuts the door.

INT. NICK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Angel is the loudest fucker that ever lived. She groans, she yells, she bangs her head against the wall, she asks for more and harder and deeper and then she yells that it's so deep and so hard - it's a running commentary and Nick sits alone on his bed listening to it until he can stand it no more.

He goes to the bathroom, grabs an ELECTRIC RAZOR and snaps it open. It's been gutted. Inside is a small MOTOROLA CELL PHONE. Nick takes it out, returns to the bedroom, and dials.

NICK

Marlee.

MARLEE (O.S.)

What is it?

NICK

I miss you so much it's killing me.

MARLEE (O.S.)

What's that noise?

NICK

That's Angel having sex.

INT. MARLEE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT (INTERCUT)

Marlee sits up violently.

MARLEE

You're watching!?

NICK

No, she's next door, believe it or not. I'm here alone. Thinking about you. And me. And the things we do.

MARLEE

(softening slightly)

We shouldn't talk on the phone.

NICK

It's the cell.

MARLEE

Maybe you could get away tomorrow night. I told F we'd bump another one.

NICK

Herrera.

MARLEE

Why?

NICK
He doesn't like me.

MARLEE
You have to be liked, don't you, Nick?

Nick frowns. -

NICK
What?

MARLEE
Come by tomorrow night. I'll see if I
can be as noisy as Angel - so you know
you really are appreciated.

NICK
What are you talking about, Marlee?

MARLEE
I'm sorry. Tomorrow.

She hangs up. Nick stares at the phone, perturbed.

EXT. SIESTA MOTEL - NIGHT

Nick walks along the gangway in search of a beer. He glances
sideways.

AN IMAGE through a gap in the drapes. Hoppy stands before
Millie beseeching her while tears flood down his face.

Nick moves on. We move in: -

INT. SIESTA. MILLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Hoppy finishes explaining the thing to Millie.

HOPPY
There I was, minding my own business,
hustling my sorry little properties,
helping newlyweds into their first
"charming little starters" and... I
was set-up! Me! Hoppy Dupree.

MILLIE
But why would the FBI care about this
trial one way or the other?

HOPPY
Millie, my heart was pounding so hard,
I couldn't hear let alone understand.
It was something to do with not
killing off American business or thin
end of the wedge or...
(more)

HOPPY (cont'd)

All I know is they said if you'd vote for the gun companies, they'd cut me some slack, maybe even let me go.

MILLIE

But I'm not sure I want to vote with the gun companies.

HOPPY

Millie, they have video!

INT. SIESTA. BREAKFAST ROOM - WEDNESDAY MORNING

Nick, as always, is first down. Next in is Millie, looking distraught and exhausted. She sinks into a chair and stares. Nick fetches her some coffee and sits next to her.

NICK

Come on, Millie, what is it? Is it something I can help you with?

MILLIE

Well, you do know something about the law, don't you?..

Herrera enters.

HERRERA

Ah, yes, Nick Easter, "the friend that Millie never had."

Nick ignores him. A moment later Grimes enters, and heads for the large silver TUREEN full of OATMEAL to serve himself.

Nick gives Millie's hand a reassuring squeeze. She starts to speak to him in a low voice.

INT. SIESTA MOTEL. NICK'S ROOM - DAY

Nick enters, locates his cell phone. Dials.

INT. COURT - WEDNESDAY

Jankle is on the stand.

JANKLE

Here is the instruction booklet for the Lady Auto. Here in large red letters are these words: "Removing the clip does not mean there is not a bullet in the chamber."

Nick notes Celeste is once again probing the consequence of her failure to read this.

Oliver McAdoo keeps shifting his briefcase around.

INT. FITCH HQ - DAY

Fitch watches the shot PAN CLUMSILY from the jury to Jankle and then back to the jury.

JANKLE

"Always make sure the safety is on and then check if there is a round in the chamber before cleaning."

CABLE

And what page are these instructions on, Mr. Jankle?

JANKLE

Page one. To buy a gun and not read the instructions is incredible.

CABLE

No further questions, your Honor.

Wendell Rohr stands up.

ROHR

Let me ask you something, Mr. Jankle, candidly. When you get a video machine or a new computer...

INT. COURT - DAY

Although we are largely in court for this encounter - cutting around the room and from juror to juror - we should also occasionally cut to Fitch watching this from his H.Q.

ROHR

... or a blender, do you - say with the blender - do you, before you make that cocktail you've been so looking forward to all day, do you read all of the instructions? Or do you just pour that alcohol over those ice cubes and turn the darn thing on?

Fitch smiles and shakes his head at this cunning attack.

JANKLE

A blender is not a gun. A blender might cut your finger off but it's unlikely to kill you or anyone else.

ROHR

I see, so with a gun, because it's so dangerous, one must do everything one possibly can to minimize the risk of getting shot?

JANKLE

Of course.

ROHR

But if the technology exists to make these guns safer, why wouldn't you use it and thus do everything you possibly could to minimize the risks?

JANKLE

It's a question of price. The poor have a right under the constitution to bear arms just as much as the rich and as I keep saying every gun comes...

ROHR

... with an instruction booklet. I have it here. It's in English and Spanish. You know a lot of poor people in this country don't read either. Why isn't this in Chinese or Vietnamese?

JANKLE

God damn it! Where does this end? I can't just make a gun now? I have to go out and learn Chinese? Do I have to pack myself into the box too and jump out and instruct every single buyer!? For God's sake, what ever happened to individual responsibility?

Jankle's face is red. He's getting angrier by the second.

ROHR

You know what this really comes down to, Mr. Jankle? It comes down to one last very simple question.

(big, big pause)

How come it's easier for a child to shoot one of your guns than it is for him to open a bottle of aspirin? How come you allow that?

And Jankle freaks.

JANKLE

Always the children!!! You liberals would turn this whole country into a nursery!! - and then you'd sue the maker of the swing every time some little brat fell off!!! That woman's a moron! You get a gun and *don't* read the instructions!?! What kind of idiocy is?...

What a mistake. Even he can see it.

ROHR

Thank you, Mr. Jankle. No further questions.

EXT. LAWRENCE, KANSAS, LAW SCHOOL - DAY

A LAW PROFESSOR points Doyle toward downtown. He sets off.

EXT. LAWRENCE, KANSAS - DAY

Doyle approaches a STOREFRONT LEGAL OFFICE. As he is about to enter, a MAN of about Nick's age exits.

DOYLE

Are you Tom Ratliff?

TOM

Uh huh.

Tom is lanky. His hair, his body, even the way he speaks is lanky. He wears round glasses and a look of perpetual but not unkind amusement.

DOYLE

Hi, my name's David Donaldson, I'm trying to find a Jeff Kerr. He's been left some money. I went up to the law school and they said you and he used to be friends.

TOM

Yeah, we were, but I haven't seen him in four years.

DOYLE

He dropped out of law school?

TOM

Switched to psychology, graduated, and left town.

DOYLE

Any old girlfriends who might keep in touch with him?

TOM

Well, actually there is. She's called Beverly Green and she lives in New York City. She called me about a month ago for some legal advice.

DOYLE

But she and Jeff aren't together anymore?

TOM

No. Beverly and Jeff were an item, then Jeff met Claire and turned into a different human being.

DOYLE

I'm sorry? He did what?

TOM

Beverly was a party animal and so long as Jeff was with her, how the dude did party. But Claire was very focused, uber-student, and all of a sudden, boom! The two of them crammed for six months, graduated early, and were gone.

DOYLE

Do you remember what Claire's last name was?

TOM

No. And I haven't seen her since either. All I can do is put you in touch with poor, rejected Beverly - who foolishly introduced them.

DOYLE

I get the impression you didn't much like them.

TOM

Jeff and Claire? Sure I did. It was just a little confusing. I never met a woman that young who was that sure of who she was, while Jeff, sweet as he was, was a total chameleon...

INT. SIESTA MOTEL - NIGHT

Nick removes the aluminium frame from his bathroom window and pulls out the whole thing.

EXT. SIESTA MOTEL - NIGHT

Nick silently lowers himself onto the roof of the carport which runs behind the motel. As soon as he lands, he steps under the overhang into shadow to check if anyone saw him.

A tall shape with a patch of white at the top looms behind him. Sensing rather than actually seeing the man, Nick whirls around.

A beam of light from a nearby street lamp illuminates a distinctive face with its even more distinctive frame of long grey hair: Stanton, the man who burglarized Nick's apartment.

STANTON
(insinuatingly)
Say, aren't you one of the jurors in
this gun trial thing?

NICK
Yeah, and you're the prick who broke
into my apartment.

Stanton makes a move and Nick, quick as a flash, POKES him
hard in his long nose. .

Stanton kneels down and clasps his snout.

STANTON
I think you broke my nose.

NICK
I know I did.

He walks away.

INT. A SHITTY MOTEL ROOM IN LAWRENCE - NIGHT

Doyle is on the bed, exhausted.

DOYLE
There's something odd here. I find out
her real name is Claire something...

INT. FITCH'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT (INTERCUT)

Fitch in his luxurious hotel room listening to Doyle on the
speakerphone.

DOYLE
... so I go back to the the college
where he swore up and down she studied
international finance...

FITCH
... which would figure...

DOYLE
... but there was no Claire anything
listed there. Not for her year.

FITCH
So what's next?

DOYLE
I'm off to New York to see the ex.

FITCH
What did you say her name was?

DOYLE

Beverly.

FITCH

Get on the plane.

DOYLE

There isn't one tonight - and if it's
okay with you I'd like to get...

(checks watch)

... three hours sleep.

FITCH

Why don't you drive?

DOYLE

It's two thousand miles! Are you
drinking?

FITCH

No I'm not! I've been dry for nine
years and you still can't leave it
alone.

The other line rings.

FITCH

Go away.

(pressing a button)

Yes?... What? He broke your nose?

INT. MARLEE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Marlee hears a knock at the door.

MARLEE

Who is it?

NICK

It's me. Let me in.

She opens it. He hurries in.

NICK

Fitch has the motel staked out. I
bumped into the guy who burglarized
the apartment.

MARLEE

He didn't follow you, did he?

NICK

No.

MARLEE

How'll you get back in?

NICK

Don't worry about me, okay? Tell me about the FBI guys.

MARLEE

I called my friend in Washington. There are no agents Napier or Nitchman. Or rather, they have one agent Napier, but he's in Seattle.

NICK

It's gotta be Fitch.

MARLEE

I'll take care of it.

A moment's silence. They look at each other. Neither feels like kissing. Both feel offended by the other's behavior, Marlee from Fitch's insinuations about the poems, Nick, not knowing this, because Marlee has been cold.

MARLEE

So, it's adios Herrera, is it?

NICK

Yeah.

Marlee hands him a medium sized plastic bag.

MARLEE

Put 'em under his bed.

Nick glances briefly into the bag. MAGAZINES.

NICK

So they went up to four and a quarter?

MARLEE

We didn't come this far, Nick, to wimp out at the first offer.

NICK

Did I say we should?

MARLEE

No.

NICK

Marlee, what's the problem?

MARLEE

Nothing. Let's have sex.

She starts to undress.

NICK

There's nothing on earth I want more,
but I can't just take off my clothes
and have sex with someone who...

MARLEE

Are you having sex with someone else?

NICK

No. Jesus, Marlee...

MARLEE

I'm sorry, okay? I apologize. I'm out
here alone, you know.

NICK

And I'm in there alone and if I can't
pull 'em the way you want you're gonna
hate me, so...

MARLEE

You're doing me a favor, Nick?

NICK

I didn't say...

MARLEE

I wish sometimes you'd do something
for yourself without always thinking
about how it's going to play.

Nick turns and walks out. Marlee hesitates, almost lets him
go, and then follows.

EXT. MOTEL WALKWAY - NIGHT

Marlee calls after him.

MARLEE

Nick... I'm sorry. I didn't mean that.

NICK

I think you did.

MARLEE

I didn't, honestly. Please stay. It
could be days until...

NICK

I can't, I gotta get back into the
motel. I'll call you tomorrow.

He kisses her briefly and walks away. She really hurt him,
knows it, but still is stunned at his rejection.

EXT. SIESTA MOTEL - NIGHT

The wind has come up. Garbage is blowing around and a piece of sheet metal is banging someplace. Nick walks across the road behind the motel and heads alongside the carport. Among the many cars parked under here is a BLACK LINCOLN NAVIGATOR. As Nick goes by, it pulls out and follows him, lights off

A window WHIRS DOWN, all this lost in the wind so Nick only becomes aware of the car's dark presence when:

FITCH

Hello, Nick. Been out visiting?

Nick spins around and almost faints.

FITCH

Get in the car, let's chat.

Nick hesitates.

FITCH

Quick, before someone sees you.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Nick obeys. Fitch reverses the car back into the garage.

FITCH

You broke one of my noses.

NICK

Well, it was a very big nose and you stuck it into my business.

FITCH

Fair comment. How was Marlee tonight?

NICK

Terrific.

FITCH

I wish we could say we felt the same way. She's made everyone nervous. We felt six million was a good initial offer and that she didn't even consi...

NICK

What?

FITCH

What?

NICK

Nothing.

FITCH

She asked for ten, okay, but still six seemed a reasonable counter-offer and that she turned it down flat seemed to us to indicate something almost... vindictive.

NICK

(a little too swiftly)

There's nothing vindictive about it. It's what the market'll stand.

FITCH

None the less, we feel we'd rather negotiate with you. See this?

He shows Nick a cashier's check for two million dollars.

FITCH

It's as good as cash. Two million dollars. For you. And another two million the day of the verdict.

NICK

You better put that back in your pocket before I grab it and rip it up.

FITCH

This may be hard for you to believe, Nick, but I know Marlee better than you do. I've been here before, I know the beginning, the middle and the end.

NICK

Really? That's amazing.

FITCH

You fell in love with her conviction, her focus. You liked that she was so serious, so driven, but now it's getting to be unsettling, too much, too intense. Once or twice it's even made you cringe...

Nick's silence emboldens Fitch.

FITCH

And seeing this, she promises to change. Once the job's over, she's gonna be different, softer, but - and here's the rub, Nick - she can't change. And next thing you know, you're gonna be lying on the ground with your legs chopped off watching her walk away. And you know why?

NICK

Why?

FITCH

'Cause they have to be righteous, women, it's what holds them together. You ever noticed that, Nick? How they're the owners of the truth?

NICK

(laughing)

Once or twice.

FITCH

Even when she's robbing me or cutting off your legs, she must be in the right. And that look she saw in your eye, that look of moral repugnance, is a rebuke to *who she is*. So what's she gonna do? Say, "What kind of a person am I?" How can I improve?

Fitch laughs. Yeah, right.

FITCH

Never. She does that, she falls apart. No, no, no, what she has to do is bounce that rebuke right back in your face.

NICK

Yikes.

FITCH

Has it begun already - the picking? Maybe you haven't noticed yet 'cause at first, it's real subtle, she just picks at little things - like who you are.

Nick laughs, but Fitch is making him nervous.

FITCH

Soon after this, comes the jealousy. She has to convince herself, you see, that you are going to leave her, that you are going to betray her. She looks through your diary, she finds an old note in a drawer, and bingo! you're the devil and she's the Virgin Mary.

(beat)

And finally... she's free to do what she has to with a clear conscience.

He turns and smiles at Nick sadly.

FITCH

You're okay for the moment, Nick. You're her parachute, she's falling through the air, she needs you. But when she hits the ground, you're worse than a liability, you're a reminder of sin. And out comes the knife and she's off and running. When they don't need you anymore, Nick, they cut you loose like that - and feel good about it. Excellent in fact. They abandon you and they survive. Intact. *Immaculate.*

Nick looks at him, thinking, "He knows about the orphanage."

NICK

The trouble is, Fitch, we know about your wife - Carol, right? - and how she left you for your best friend, so while you're trying to unsettle me, all I'm hearing is a bitter old man mumbling to himself.

FITCH

Ooh, to the heart, Nick, you got me there, you surely have. But I'll tell you, boy, loving Carol as I did, would I get her into something as dangerous as this? Would I risk losing her? Just for money? Never. Not me, pal, not even bitter old me...

Nick shrugs, affecting boredom, and gets out of the car.

FITCH

The offer still stands, Nick. You wanna negotiate direct, be the man, call me.

Nick walks away. He needs air. He breathes deeply. Fitch smiles to himself and drives away.

INT. SIESTA MOTEL. NICK'S ROOM - THURSDAY MORNING

Nick peeks out through his door. After a few moments, he sees Herrera charge out of his room and head off down the stairs.

EXT. SIESTA MOTEL. GANGWAY - DAY

Nick jumps out with a small stick in his hand and manages to toss it into the closing door before it closes. Just in time because Herrera - dressed in sweats - now looks back.

HERRERA

Breakfast's ready, Nick, better get down and start kissing asses.

NICK

Ha ha. Damn, I forgot something.

He runs back to his room.

The CAMERA whips around. Herrera is coming back up the stairs! He reaches the top - turns - and starts down again. He's exercising.

Nick exits his room with the plastic bag Marlee gave him - and darts into Herrera's room - just as Herrera gets to the top of the stairs, turns, and goes back down again.

INT. HERRERA'S ROOM - DAY

Nick takes out the magazines and starts putting them under Herrera's mattress. "Fortune", "Business Week", "Investor's Weekly", all with stories about the gun trial in New Orleans.

EXT. SIESTA MOTEL - DAY

Herrera keeps pounding up and down the stairs.

INT. HERRERA'S ROOM - DAY

Nick is about to shove the last magazine under the mattress when he stops. It's "Chicks With Dicks". On the cover is a woman by any other name - but with a dick.

NICK

Marlee...

At which point, he sees Herrera storming past the window on the way to his door!

Nick rolls rapidly under the bed as Herrera enters, panting, and flings himself face down on the floor only inches from where Nick lies!

HERRERA

One... two... three...

He's doing push-ups, his profile appearing and disappearing as he rises and falls. At 22, the arms lock. He breaks wind.

HERRERA

Chingada.

He jumps up and heads for the bathroom. Nick looks over the bed, sees the closed bathroom door, and exits fast.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

The judge listens on the phone.

JUDGE HARKIN

What kinds of magazines does Mr.
Herrera ask you to bring him?

EXT. STREET - DAY (INTERCUT)

Marlee on pay phone.

MARLEE

Well, financial magazines, mostly, you
know about the trial and so on. Frank
fancies himself a bit of an investor.

JUDGE HARKIN

How do you get the magazines to him?

MARLEE

Well, let's just say I sneak in for my
usual fee and do what I usually do...

JUDGE HARKIN

Oh... I see.

MARLEE

Maybe you'd like me to come and juice
your moose.

Silence. Then:

JUDGE HARKIN

What do you look like?

MARLEE

Well, I have huge tits and a narrow
little butt and the tightest little...

JUDGE HARKIN

Stop! Thank you very much for your
call. You're a good citizen. Thank
you, er?...

MARLEE

Brian.

Marlee hangs up. The Judge wipes his brow. Brian?

EXT. SIESTA MOTEL - DAY

The JURY BUS pulls away. Two POLICE CARS arrive.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Nick faces the Judge, who is looking very stern.

JUDGE HARKIN

I wanted to ask you a couple of
questions, Nick.

NICK
Fire away, sir.

JUDGE HARKIN
It's about... Frank Herrera.

NICK
Yes...

JUDGE HARKIN
What do you make of him?

NICK
Well, I like him personally, but he's made up his mind about everything.

JUDGE HARKIN
These were found under his bed.

He pushes the magazines across the desk to Nick, who flips through until he gets to: "Chicks With Dicks". He looks up.

NICK
Well, I guess he hasn't made up his mind about everything...

The Judge fights a smile - and loses.

CLOSE ON HERRERA'S FACE:

HERRERA
OUTRAGEOUS!!! This is worse than Castro! This is a disgrace!!!

The lawyers roll their eyes.

SHINE ROYCE'S FACE,

listens attentively in court as the day begins. Nick leans over to him (watched by Cable in court) and Fitch from HQ.

NICK
Anything you need... anything at all, just ask and I'll explain. Okay?

SHINE ROYCE
Gotcha, Nick. Thanks...

INT. HOPPY'S REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY

Napier and Nitchman tilt forward menacingly in their chairs.

NITCHMAN
You don't have to give us anything, Hoppy, except your assurances. When the trial is over, they poll the jury.
(more)

NITCHMAN (cont'd)
We in the FBI will find out who voted
which way and we'll either press
charges or we won't. It's very...

At which point the door crashes open and TWO MEN IN SUITS
burst in, displaying FBI BADGES.

1ST MAN IN SUIT
FBI! Put your hands in the air! FBI!

2ND MAN IN SUIT
Let's see your badges! Give! Give!

Napier and Nitchman, suddenly looking really scared, hand
over their badges.

NAPIER
It was kind of a joke...

1ST MAN IN SUIT
(handcuffing him)
Impersonating FBI Officers!? A joke?
We in the FBI don't find that funny.
We'll see how funny a judge finds it.

2ND MAN IN SUIT
(handcuffing Nitchman)
Agent Hatter! We've secured them!

Marlee appears in the doorway. She wears a suit and shades.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - DAY

Fitch confronts the gun makers.

FITCH
You've got your last defense witness
on, so chances are they'll get the
case by the weekend. I think Nick's in
there with the power.

STUEBEN
So what should we do?

FITCH
I say get ready to pay the twenty.
I'll keep trying to find out who they
are and maybe you won't have to pay.

Jankle glowers at him from a couch.

JANKLE
If they double-cross us, so help me
God, I'm gonna kill that boy.

FITCH
 Fuck off, Jankle.
 (to the others)
 Get the money in the fund.

INT. CAR. DRIVING - DAY

Napier and Nitchman sit in the back, still handcuffed. Marlee sits up front, inspecting Napier and Nitchman's badges.

MARLEE
 I tell you, these badges look realer
 than ours do.

They cross the border into Mississippi.

MARLEE
 Pull over here.

It's one of those 'SCENIC VIEW' rest stops. The car leaves the highway and comes to a stop.

EXT. SCENIC VIEW REST STOP - DAY

Marlee and the 2 Suits lead terrified Napier and Nitchman to a tree at the edge of a bluff. Marlee takes out a DIGITAL CAMERA.

MARLEE
 Okay. Undress.

NAPIER/NITCHMAN
 What?!

INT. FITCH HQ - DAY

Fitch studies Cable and his ADVERTISING EXPERT. His computer BEEPS. "Mail". Fitch opens it.

A PHOTOGRAPH: Napier and Nitchman, naked and perplexed in the middle of nowhere. Message: "Men in Suits - Not."

The phone rings.

FITCH
 Hello.

EXT. RESTAURANT AND BAR PATIO - DAY (INTERCUT)

Convivial sounds deliberately featured.

MARLEE
 You better get out there and collect
 your boys before they freeze their
 nuts off.

FITCH
The hell with them.

MARLEE
Anyway, I just called to say good bye.

FITCH
What?

MARLEE
Yeah, made a deal with the other side.
You guys are just too damn stingy...

FITCH
Wait! Marlee, listen, I've got the
twenty million! They'll go for it!

Marlee smiles but doesn't say anything for a while.

FITCH
Marlee?

MARLEE
Wow...

FITCH
What?

MARLEE
I don't know. This is awkward. I
already made the other deal.

FITCH
Who says Rohr'll pay once it's over?
A bird in the hand is worth two in the
bush, Marlee. At least meet me?

Silence.

MARLEE
Say please.

FITCH
Please.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING. NEW YORK - DAY

Doyle comes plodding up the stairs. He checks the address Tom gave him in Lawrence, Kansas and approaches the door. From inside, he can hear the sound of a woman getting beaten up.

He knocks. The noise stops. Moments later, BEVERLY opens the door as far as the chain will allow and peers out at him.

DOYLE
Beverly?

She has the beginnings of a black eye, but she is, in spite of that, still beautiful.

BEVERLY

Who's asking?

A YOUNG MAN can be seen behind, pacing angrily, wanting to get back to the beating. Doyle hands her his card.

DOYLE

I'm looking for Jeff Kerr. Can you help me?

BEVERLY

I don't know if this is a good time.

DOYLE

I'll give you a thousand dollars now and more if you can help me.

(softer)

And he won't lay a hand on you if I'm there, that I promise.

It's an odd, almost intimate moment. At 29, she's too old to be living like this, strung out, such pallor, and Doyle's fatherly words move and encourage her. She undoes the chain.

INT. BEVERLY'S PLACE - DAY

The BOYFRIEND glowers from a nearby couch as Doyle talks to Beverly.

DOYLE

So, if you don't know where Jeff is, do you have any idea where Claire might be?

BEVERLY

No I do not.

DOYLE

Any idea where she was from originally?

BEVERLY

I think it was Columbia, Missouri. But Claire wasn't her real name. Her real name was Gabriella.

DOYLE

What? Gabriella what?

BEVERLY

I can't remember. She always had this dark secret thing going. "If you only knew what I've been through you might understand why I'm such a bitch." Made of steel, but still with the self-pity.

DOYLE

I've flown seventeen million miles to see you, given you a grand, and you don't even know her last name?

BEVERLY

There was another girl knew her as a kid, if I do some scrounging around maybe I can get her last name for you. Course I'd have to miss work...

Doyle looks at her.

DOYLE

I'll give you another three thousand dollars if you can find her real name by six p.m., okay? My cell number's on the card. Call as soon as you can.

BEVERLY

I will.

Doyle walks wearily out. As soon as he's gone, Beverly picks up the phone. Dials.

EXT. HOUSE IN A FIELD. SOUTH KANSAS - DAY

A farm in big farmland. Beyond the house, a small landing strip and a slightly battered single engine plane.

The phone rings inside the house and then gets forwarded into a barn. The CAMERA gets forwarded in there too.

INT. MILKING BARN - DAY

PHOEBE, a pretty, fresh faced (almost hippyish) young woman, holds her CELL PHONE against her ear with her shoulder and manages to keep MILKING A COW.

PHOEBE

Hello?... Oh, hi, Beverly! How are you?!

INT. BEVERLY'S DUMP IN NEW YORK - DAY (INTERCUT)

Beverly, who stands by the window, the worst of urban New York behind her, can hear cows MOOING in the background.

BEVERLY

I hear cows, Phoebe?

PHOEBE

Yes! I'm milking one as we speak! She's called Henrietta. We have this organic farm now, me and Jim, and two kids and...

BEVERLY

God, I haven't milked a cow since I was ten...

Beverly looks quite struck by the thought of rural life and its contrast with what she now has.

PHOEBE

Oops! Almost dropped the phone in the milk there!

BEVERLY

I got a message the other day from Claire asking me to call her, but she used her real name and I was tired and erased it. Was it Gaby?... Gabriella..?

PHOEBE

Gabrielle. Gabrielle Brandt.

BEVERLY

Gabrielle Brandt. Right! You don't have her number, do you? I erased that too.

And now Phoebe is belatedly getting suspicious.

PHOEBE

I'm sorry. I haven't seen her in a while, but she calls now and then. Why don't you give me your number and if she calls, I'll get her to call you?

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

Doyle stands on the down escalator, too exhausted to walk.

INT. BEVERLY'S PLACE - DAY

Beverly hangs up with Phoebe, checks Doyle's card, and dials. She listens.

BEVERLY

It's not going through.

BOYFRIEND

Call him now he'll feel like it was too easy anyhow. Let's go out and get a drink and call him later. Okay?

Beverly looks at him. Hating him. Hating herself. Then:

BEVERLY

Okay.

INT. COURT - THURSDAY

Cable's Advertising Expert is being cross examined by Rohr. It's probably pretty exciting, but Rohr glances at the jury and sees they're all bored and exhausted.

ROHR

No further questions, your Honor.

JUDGE HARKIN

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the worst is over. Tomorrow, closing arguments begin and when that's done, you'll start your deliberations.

EXT. LONG PIER - NIGHT

Marlee drives around, checking. But she see only Fitch's car. She parks and walks up toward "Moby's Dock", a bar at the end.

INT. MOBY'S DOCK - NIGHT

Marlee enters. Fitch, alone at a table, the Ocean washing away behind him. Marlee sits next to him.

MARLEE

Why Moby's Dock?

FITCH

I guess they felt uncomfortable with Moby's Dick. Who wouldn't?

MARLEE

And that's the last line I feed you.

FITCH

Can I get you a drink?

MARLEE

I wouldn't want to cause you any more pain. Now that it's over between us.

FITCH

It's not over. You'd be an idiot to take Rohr's dubious percentage when you can take our...

MARLEE

Okay. Whiskey.

FITCH

(to a waiter)

Glenfidich for the lady please. So where do we stand?

MARLEE

Well, for a start, no more snooping around?

FITCH

If we're partners? Over. Finished.

Fitch's cell phone rings.

FITCH

Hello?

DOYLE (O.S.)

Her real name is Gabriella something and she's from Columbia, Missouri.

FITCH

Uh huh, good, good.

DOYLE (O.S.)

Did you hear what I said?! She had a fake name ten years ago! There's something weird here!

FITCH

Uh huh, yes. Yes there is.

DOYLE (O.S.)

I'm gonna go there and find out just who the... Are you in a bar!?

FITCH

Yes, I'm with her now.

DOYLE (O.S.)

Don't drink!

FITCH

Good bye.

He hangs up, smiles at Marlee.

MARLEE

I want the money ready for transfer by noon Saturday or the deal's off.

FITCH

That's not a problem, but they're eager to know who you have and who needs pushing...

The whiskey arrives. Marlee offers it to Fitch. He smiles. And shakes his head.

MARLEE (O.S.)

Jerry, Sylvia, Loreen, Shine and Angel ...

INT. SIESTA MOTEL - NIGHT

Nick is leading the celebration. The end is in sight! Just about everyone is drinking beer.

MARLEE

... are in the bag for Nick, either way. That's six including Nick. Dillon we're not sure about.

FITCH

Dillon's a closet queen, doesn't want his mama to know. He's with us.

MARLEE

You got to him?

FITCH

Yes. How about Millie?

MARLEE

Millie's gonna be so grateful for what we did visa vis Hoppy...

Millie kisses Nick and dances with him.

MARLEE (O.S.)

... that she'll probably do what he says too. Even if it means voting for you. That's eight. Lonnie, we don't know about. Rikki we think may be anti-gun...

See Rikki smiling brightly.

FITCH (O.S.)

Yeah, she's anti-abortion too, but that didn't stop her having one.

INT. MOBY'S DOCK - NIGHT

Marlee looks at Fitch.

FITCH

And no, the husband doesn't know. Yet. We got to her too.

MARLEE

And then there's Savelle.

INT. SIESTA MOTEL - NIGHT

Nick goes over to Savelle, who's sitting in a corner looking superior, and tries to talk to him.

MARLEE (O.S.)

Savelle's a wild card, but Nick's working on him.

FITCH (O.S.)

And that leaves Herman Grimes.

INT. MOBY'S DOCK - NIGHT

Marlee smiles.

MARLEE

Herman will be listened to.

FITCH

Which way is he leaning?

MARLEE

He's the hardest to read. He's absolutely determined to follow the Judge's orders against discussing the case.

FITCH

Of all the nerve.

Marlee smiles.

EXT. MOBY'S DOCK - NIGHT

Marlee and Fitch come out.

FITCH

Look, I don't know why, but I've taken a shine to you...

MARLEE

Maybe in the mistaken belief that I remind you of you?

FITCH

Perhaps. But I thought I should warn you. When Nick gets his cut? It's a toss up between you and Beverly.

Marlee stares at him, unable to hide her shock for a moment.

FITCH

It's what the poems are about. He loves you, but you scare him. He finds you too driven, too relentless. She isn't as interesting, but when he's with her, he's happy. And the sex is great.

Marlee narrows her eyes.

MARLEE

Why are you doing this?

FITCH

I'm just telling you what I've been reading, okay? I'm a disbarred lawyer, Marlee, not a monster. I'd genuinely hate to see you get hurt.

Marlee shrugs, as if to say, "Hey, even if it's true, who cares," and walks away. But as soon as her back is to him, her face falls. Oh, my God, no...

INT. BEVERLY'S PLACE - NIGHT

Doyle closes his notebook, gives Beverly her money, and thanks her. The boyfriend snickers at how easy it was.

DOYLE

Was Jeff good to you?

BEVERLY

Yes, he was. He was a good guy. He was kind and smart and treated me well.

She shoots a nervous glance at the boyfriend.

DOYLE

I think that's what a woman deserves, don't you? As a minimum?

BEVERLY

I guess that's how I used to feel...

DOYLE

Beverly... would you permit me to do you a small favor?

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BEVERLY'S PLACE - NIGHT

The Boyfriend tumbles down the first flight of steps. Doyle trudges after him. Now he looks up at Beverly and puts his finger to his forehead like a man tipping his hat. Then he kicks the boyfriend down the next flight and disappears.

INT. SIESTA MOTEL. NICK'S ROOM - NIGHT (INTERCUT)

Nick is entertaining Jerry, Poodle, Shine, Angel, Lonnie, and Dillon. There's music and beers and bonhomie. Nick feels his phone vibrate and heads for the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM. SIESTA MOTEL - NIGHT

Nick WHISPERS into the phone.

NICK

Hello!

MARLEE

Are you having fun?

NICK

I've got the whole gang here. What do you want?

MARLEE

Tell me you love me.

NICK

I...

JERRY (O.S.)

For Christ's sake, Nick, hurry up in there! I don't piss I'm gonna explode.

NICK

Hey, go out and do a coupla lamp posts, whydon'cha, Jerry!? And take Poodle with you!

Jerry laughs and starts banging on the door.

NICK

I gotta go.

MARLEE

Have you been calling Beverly?

NICK

I called her on her birthday. Why?

MARLEE

Why did you call her? You still have a thing for her? Why did you call her?

Nick freezes. Then, very quietly:

NICK

Don't do this, Marlee.

MARLEE

Fuck you, Nick.

And she hangs up.

INT. MARLEE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Marlee lies back on her bed, shocked at her jealousy.

EXT. COURT - DAY

Heavy MEDIA PRESENCE again.

REPORTER

So, today is closing arguments in the case of Celeste Wood versus...

The Jury Bus goes by, Nick looking out.

INT. COURT - FRIDAY MORNING

Rohr stands in front of the jury.

ROHR

The defense will talk about the Second Amendment and accuse us of trying to take their guns away. "The thin end of the wedge", they'll say. Try, against all the might of the NRA, to stop a twelve year old laying his hands on an assault weapon...

EXT. AIRPORT. COLUMBIA, MISSOURI - DAY

Doyle rents a car.

ROHR (O.S.)

... or even simply ask a gunmaker to make a safer product? "Thin end of the wedge..."

INT. COURT - DAY

Nick lets his eyes drift around the court room. Jankle glares at him with such malevolence, he almost flinches back.

ROHR

And it is the thin end of the wedge - the thin end of the wedge of reason, I would argue - but an attack on the 2nd Amendment? Maybe. Maybe it is. So, what are we to do? Must we live with the consequences of a law written when muskets were the height of technology? Must we accept 30,000 gun deaths a year as the price of "freedom"? Or should we amend the constitution?

He shakes his head. It's beyond him.

ROHR

These are complex and lofty questions. But, this is not what this case is about. This case is about a woman...

Rohr turns and indicates Celeste Wood.

ROHR

This case is about Celeste Wood. And I would argue that when you look at her, broken in body and spirit, bereft of physical freedom... I would argue that this is not complex and not lofty. - I would argue it's a simple case of base greed and negligence with this poor woman as the end result.

EXT. PUBLIC SCHOOL. COLUMBIA, MISSOURI - DAY

Doyle runs up the steps. A FAT BOY is pestering a LITTLE GIRL in the entrance.

DOYLE

Stop that.

INT. PUBLIC SCHOOL - DAY

Doyle is talking to an OLD TEACHER as they pore over photos of Gabrielle Brandt in the Year Book.

OLD TEACHER

There was some tragedy in the family's past, but we were never told what it was. Gabrielle didn't come to the school until she was nine, although, God knows, she seemed so much older...

DOYLE

Do you know where her parents are now?

OLD TEACHER

I think I remember hearing they died shortly after Gabrielle graduated.

DOYLE

Where were they from originally?

OLD TEACHER

I don't know, but if it's important, I could let you go through the records.

INT. COURT - DAY

Rohr is up close now, leaning on the rail.

ROHR

I look at you jurors sitting here before me and I ask you this: If you had the capacity to make a gun and you could, by putting in an extra hour, make it safe - what would you do?

(more)

ROHR (cont'd)

If, as I believe, you'd put in that extra hour, then you must find for my client and grant damages that will truly be punitive. Thank you.

INT. JURY ROOM - FRIDAY LUNCH

Lunch and the jurors eating happily.

NICK

Say, Herman, would you mind asking the court if we could deliberate tomorrow, Saturday? I think everyone would like to get home as soon as...

GRIMES

No, I will not ask the court anything of the sort. And frankly, Nick, I think we're all getting a little fed up with your know-it-all attitude. I'm in charge, okay, and I'm going to stay in charge...

NICK

Okay. Gee, I'm sorry...

But a close look at Nick's face says, "And your days are numbered, you blind bastard."

NICK

Well, I have to go to the bathroom...

INT. COURT - DAY

Judge Harkin reconvenes the court.

JUDGE HARKIN

In the interest of getting the jury home as soon as possible, I'm going to suggest they come in here to commence their deliberations tomorrow morning. Does anyone object?

Herman Grimes's lips compress in anger, but he says nothing.

JUDGE HARKIN

Mr. Cable, you may begin.

Durwood Cable steps forward.

CABLE

I understand a person might have strong views about guns, might even want to ban them, and if that's what you want, be my guest.

(more)

CABLE (cont'd)

Raise money, take out an ad, make your views known. Vote. That's how it's done in this country. We vote on these things.

Angel nods her-head.

CABLE

But what's going on here is something else. This is back door legislation through bankruptcy.

INT. BASEMENT. PUBLIC SCHOOL. COLUMBIA, MISSOURI - DAY

A sweaty and dusty Doyle toils on among a thousand boxes.

CABLE (O.S.)

Every time there's a case like this, the manufacturers have to find the money for a defense. And it's breaking them, putting them out of business. And it's not fair.

Doyle pulls out a card. On the top is written, GABRIELLE BRANDT, TRANSFERRING FROM BOYLESTON, KANSAS. HOME ADDRESS, 35 PRIMROSE AVENUE...

EXT. PUBLIC SCHOOL. COLUMBIA, MISSOURI - DAY

Doyle exits with the kids. Fatboy is on the steps pestering a different girl. Doyle smacks him on the back of the head.

INT. DOYLE'S CAR - DAY

Doyle studies a map, peering at Kansas. Now he draws a line with his finger between Columbia, Missouri, and Boyleston, Kansas. It's a long, long way.

INT. COURT - DAY

Cable continues.

CABLE

Don't get me wrong, I have every sympathy for Ms. Woods, but she bought the gun, she had the instructions, and it was her choice not to read them.

Cable moves in closer.

CABLE

But the men and women who'll lose their jobs if this company goes down have no choice.

(more)

CABLE (cont'd)

I look at you and I see hard working, honest folk and I know you don't want to see people like yourselves put on the street so that Wendell Rohr can buy hisself another plantation or jet. It's a scam, ladies and gentleman, it's a bill of goods. Don't buy it. Thank you.

FITCH AND DOYLE - DRIVING - TWILIGHT

Fitch is being driven through picturesque New Orleans, Doyle slogs along on an endless plain.

DOYLE

It's a ten hour drive, but it's quicker than plane. How's it going there?

FITCH

You've got until noon tomorrow. That's when I transfer the money. You can do all this via computer these days.

DOYLE

With that much money?

FITCH

There's passwords and checks, but basically... yeah. It's terrifying.

DOYLE

I'm so tired.

FITCH

Well, why don't you take a nap on the way up there?

DOYLE

Yeah, I might do that.

FITCH

It's amazing what ten minutes'll do for you.

DOYLE

Thanks.

Doyle hangs up.

DOYLE

Unappreciative son of a bitch...

INT. SIESTA MOTEL. NICK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nick exits the motel as before.

INT. DOYLE'S CAR - NIGHT

Doyle keeps driving, but the monotony of the road is putting him to sleep.

INT. MARLEE'S MOTEL - FRIDAY NIGHT

Marlee lets Nick in. He kisses her, but without much intimacy. He's wired.

NICK

I've got a problem. Grimes. He's suddenly taken a dislike to me. He opposes everything I say. He's going to try and turn the jury against me just to prove he's in charge. I'm....

Marlee reaches in a drawer and hands him a small PILL BOTTLE.

MARLEE

Methergine.

Nick stares at it.

NICK

O-kay...

He pockets it. My God, she's cold.

MARLEE

Anything else?

NICK

No.

He turns away, getting ready to leave.

MARLEE

I want to know. Do you and Beverly still talk?

NICK

I haven't spoken to her since her birthday.

MARLEE

But why did you call her even on her birthday?

NICK

She's a sad case, Marlee. I called. She was happy to hear my voice. That was it.

MARLEE

You write any poems about her?

NICK

No.

But he had to think about it and she assumes he's lying.

MARLEE

She always said you and she had great sex. Is that true?

NICK

We have great sex, Marlee.

MARLEE

As good?

NICK

Better.

MARLEE

But you'd say that anyway because you always have to please and I...

NICK

Marlee. Stop. Okay? This is pathetic.

MARLEE

(icily)

I think you better leave, Nick, it's getting late.

He gets to the door, opens it, and is halfway gone, before:

MARLEE

Nick, I'm sorry. All these years waiting for this, pretending to be somebody I'm not... It's worn me out. I know it's been hard on you too, but I promise, when this is over, I'll change, I'll be different.

Nick remembers Fitch's line, "and she promises to change..."

NICK

Yeah, you'll be richer.

MARLEE

(hardening again)

No, I'll be satisfied.

Nick turns and leaves.

A MASSIVE GUN

roars toward us, the muzzle of hell, with two lights mounted either side and we're going to go right into it, and suddenly a TRUCK HORN BLASTS...

INT. DOYLE'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

... and Doyle wakes up and wrenches the wheel to the side. He just misses the truck and ploughs onto the shoulder. It's raining. He looks up ahead. There's a bridge. He drives under it, leans back in his seat, and goes to sleep.

INT. SIESTA MOTEL. DINING ROOM - SATURDAY MORNING

As soon as Grimes enters the dining room, Nick jumps up to serve himself oatmeal from the large, silver-lidded tureen. Now he drops three of the tiny Methergine pills onto the next logical scoop.

Pretending to put berries on his oatmeal, he watches covertly as Grimes just catches all three melting pills with the ladle and dumps them onto his plate. Then he shuffles out with his tray, back to his room.

Nick is alone for a moment, and then the last of the alternates, Henry Vu, the shrimp fisherman, enters.

NICK

Ah, Henry, we haven't talked much lately. How are you? How's the shrimp business getting along without you?

EXT. SIESTA MOTEL - DAY

A strange, pointless sort of shot. A row of rooms. Nothing much happening. And then... And then A CRY OF DISTRESS.

INT. SIESTA MOTEL. DINING ROOM - DAY

Nick looks up from fetching Henry Vu another cup of coffee.

NICK

I wonder what that was?

INT. COURT - DAY

Everyone - including Fitch - is here to hear the Judge's instructions to the jury.

JUDGE HARKIN

I'm afraid Mr. Grimes has been taken to the Hospital. We're not yet sure what the problem is, but it does not, you'll be glad to hear, appear life threatening in any way.

Fitch reacts. Would Marlee really do this? Poison a blind man?? My God, she's too good to be true. Nick meets his eye for a moment, slight wink, and then for general consumption:

NICK

Phew. Thank God, he's okay.

JUDGE HARKIN
(to the jury)
So, has a new foreman been chosen?

NICK
I have that honor, sir.

Fitch almost laughs.

INT. DOYLE'S CAR - DAY

Under the bridge it's still dark and Doyle sleeps on. A passing truck wakes him suddenly. He looks at his watch and:

DOYLE
Oh, my God.

Doyle stumbles out of the car and heads for a field.

EXT. KANSAS - DAY

Doyle unzips. Starts to pee. All around him are swaying wheat fields. Nothing could be more sickening to the queasy Doyle.

DOYLE
My God, I'm late.

INT. JURY ROOM - DAY

Nick is on his feet at the head of the long table.

NICK
Well, here we all are at last, free to speak our minds... Let's take it in turns. Millie?

EXT. KANSAS - DAY

Doyle drives as fast as he dares.

INT. JURY ROOM - DAY

Nick covertly checks his watch as:

MILLIE
You can sue a hospital if they do something wrong, why not a gun maker?

NICK
Rikki?

RIKKI
(awkward, not happy)
Well, I feel sorry for Mrs. Wood, obviously, but there were those instructions.

INT. DOYLE'S CAR - DAY

Doyle arrives in the outskirts of BOYLESTON. He checks the address and pulls over to ask someone for directions.

INT. JURY ROOM - SATURDAY

Nick watches Dillon.

DILLON

Where I work out, you could kill yourself if you did something stupid with the weights. I mean everyone has to take some responsibility...

He falters. Nick lets him off the hook, moves on.

NICK

Jerry?

JERRY

Well, I can see both sides, totally... but it's like, what's the law? That's what I'm not so sure about. I wanna hear what you have to say, Nick...

NICK

Savelle?

SAVELLE

Fuck them all. Fuck the corporations and fuck anyone dumb enough to play with a gun without reading the instructions.

NICK

So?

SAVELLE

Well... probably? Double fuck the corporation.

NICK

Okay. Lonnie.

LONNIE

I work in a supermarket. We dread being sued...

EXT. ST. REGIS HOTEL - DAY

Marlee pulls up in her car.

INT. DOYLE'S CAR - DAY

Doyle arrives on PRIMROSE AVENUE. Finds number 35. This is Marlee's childhood home, an uninspiring but not unpleasant

little home among others on a tree-lined street.

INT. JURY ROOM - DAY

Nick continues the roll call.

NICK
Angel?

ANGEL
One of 'em says one thing, I think,
"Damn right!" then the other side says
another thing an' I'm goin' "That
mother's down." Truth is, Nick, I'm
totally confused. Lord knows I feel
sorry for that woman, but what with
Karma an' all, you gotta wonder....

NICK
Loreen?

Loreen looks up from lifting fluff off herself with scotch
tape. Up until now she has never said a word.

LOREEN
Huh?

NICK
What do you think?

LOREEN
I come from a place where sometimes
you sleep under the window, know what
I'm sayin', gangbangers blasting away
in the night. What do I think? I think
we should take every last one a them
hard faced, thin lipped, cold-eyed,
straggly-haired sons of bitches, shove
'em up against a wall and shoot 'em in
the balls. Repeatedly.

NICK
Well, I think we know where Loreen
stands... Shine?

EXT. NUMBER 35. WIDE SHOT - DAY

Doyle talks to A MARRIED COUPLE at their door. Two KIDS, a
BOY and GIRL stand nearby. Doyle is invited in.

INT. ST. REGIS RESTAURANT - DAY

Marlee and Fitch sit at a table. His LAPTOP with WIRELESS
MODEM sits between them.

MARLEE
Let's get online, Fitch.

INT. JURY ROOM - DAY

Nick thanks Shine and invites Poodle to talk.

INT. 35, PRIMROSE AVENUE - DAY

The YOUNG GIRL plays a PINBALL MACHINE. Through a doorway, the BOY can be seen playing DUKE NUKEM, a video game where you go from room to room, shooting people.

And then the WOMAN leads Doyle down a corridor, talking and pointing...

.... and the sound FADES and the MUSIC consumes everything as the IMAGE which started the movie returns...

INT. SAME PLACE - TWENTY YEARS AGO - DAY

A LOW POV SHOT pursues a LAUGHING GIRL OF 7 down the corridor. The child has a TOY GUN in her hand. We arrive in a bedroom... the little girl turns and points the gun into CAMERA.... The unseen follower looks away and the SHOT PANS RIGHT to where something glints between the mattress and the bed frame...

INT. JURY ROOM - DAY

VU

Guns are what killed my family. Guns
are what I came to America to escape.

INT. 35, PRIMROSE AVENUE - TWENTY YEARS AGO - DAY

For the first time we see 8 YEAR OLD MARLEE as she REACHES UNDER THE MATTRESS. The similarity to the adult Marlee is shocking. She pulls A SEMIAUTOMATIC out and looks at it.

It's okay. The CLIP is out.

Her sister, JANE, still points the TOY GUN at her and grins. Marlee aims THE SEMIAUTOMATIC at Jane's head. She says something. Both girls laugh...

INT. 35, PRIMROSE AVENUE - TODAY

Doyle listens on. The only sound now penetrating is that of the PINBALL MACHINE, dinging and the repetitive, mechanical gunshots from the Duke Nukem game.

INT. ST. REGIS DINING ROOM - DAY

Marlee nods to Fitch. He offers her the COMPUTER. She leans over and hits "ENTER".

INT. 35, PRIMROSE AVENUE - TWENTY YEARS AGO - DAY

Young Marlee, smiling broadly, STARTS TO PULL THE TRIGGER. The other child LAUGHS. And THE GUN FIRES! JANE... a look of terrible shock... And back she flies. YOUNG MARLEE's mouth opens in a terrible scream.

INT. ST. REGIS DINING ROOM - DAY

Marlee stands and starts to walk away. On her face is a look of triumphant revenge so intense it hurts. And now sounds start to come back, a pumping heart, heels clicking in the marble lobby.

INT. JURY ROOM - DAY

Vu finishes.

JERRY

So I guess that leaves you, Nick. What do you think?

NICK

How many of you were threatened by the gun companies?

He looks at Dillon and Rikki. They look away.

NICK

Millie was too. And Stella. And Jerry. And me. Is this the way good people do business? What do I think?

EXT. BOYLESTON - DAY

Doyle plunges out of the house, reaching for his CELL PHONE. Dialling!!!

INT. ST. REGIS DINING ROOM - DAY

Fitch's phone begins to ring. Fitch picks up. Listens.

FITCH

WHAT?

He stands up, knocking over his table, and sprints toward the door. A WAITER asks for PAYMENT. Fitch throws him backward into a DESSERT TROLLEY.

EXT. ST. REGIS HOTEL - DAY

Fitch comes tumbling out. Looks both ways. No Marlee to be seen. He puts his phone to his ear again.

FITCH
No, it's Saturday! Everything's
closed. The money's gone! Come back
right away!

He snaps the phone shut. Breathes. Looks around.

FITCH
Wonderful.

And then his phone rings again.

FITCH
Yeah?

INT. FITCH HQ - DAY (INTERCUT)

Oliver on the phone.

OLIVER
We've got a verdict. They want
everyone in court in twenty minutes.

FITCH
A verdict... Oh, I can't wait to hear
this...

EXT. COURT - DAY

Marlee parks her old car not far from court. She goes to the trunk. In the trunk is a can of gasoline. She opens it and pours gasoline on some blankets.

INT. COURT - SATURDAY

The Jury comes in. Nick smiles at Fitch. Fitch stares back at him coldly. Jankle's eyes are on him like laser sites.

JUDGE HARKIN
Do you have a verdict, Mr. Foreman?

NICK
Yes we do.

JUDGE HARKIN
And what is your verdict.

EXT. COURT - DAY

Marlee lights a match.

INT. COURT - DAY

Nick reads.

NICK

In the first count, false advertising.
Guilty. In the second count, product
liability, guilty.

JUDGE HARKIN

And what is the amount of your award
for actual damages?

NICK

One million dollars.

JUDGE HARKIN

And what is your award for punitive
damages?

Nick looks at Jankle.

NICK

(coldly)

Two hundred million dollars... on each
count.

Fitch looks down. Was that a tiny smile? Impossible to say.
Jankle *VIBRATES with anger.*

JUDGE HARKIN

As the verdict is unanimous on all
counts the jury will not be polled and
is hereby released. I would like...

But Nick is already gone.

INT. REAR OF COURTHOUSE - DAY

Nick runs down the back stairs at great speed.

INT. FRONT OF COURTHOUSE - DAY

Jankle and Fitch run down the front stairs.

EXT. REAR OF COURTHOUSE - DAY

Nick comes out into a world of SWIRLING SMOKE.

SMOKE EVERYWHERE!!

He looks around. Nothing. Nobody. He can hardly see a dozen
feet ahead. No car. No Marlee. Has he been abandoned? Was
Fitch right all along? Sirens can be heard.

And then suddenly Marlee screeches up in an SUV with tinted
windows. Nick jumps in.

INT. SUV - DAY

It's a one way street. Marlee has to come around to the front of the courthouse to get away. As they emerge, the smoke blows aside. Nick looks out and sees the JURORS on the steps.

NICK

Stop.

He looks at his fellow jurors. The MEDIA press in on them. Jankle, with Fitch nearby, starts giving an interview. His face is puce with rage and every now and then he prods his finger toward the jurors, several of whom, in particular Jerry and Millie, seem hurt and perplexed as they scan the crowd, obviously looking for Nick.

Nick opens his door.

MARLEE

Nick!

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Nick gets out.

NICK

What are they gonna do, Marlee, call the cops and say, "We bribed this juror and he fucked us over"?

MARLEE

Don't do this, Nick.

NICK

These are my friends and this is for me, okay, Marlee? For me. You don't like it...

He makes a motion with his hand: drive away. Now he turns and walks up toward the steps, leaving Marlee behind, fuming.

JERRY

Nick! Nick, ol' pal! Ah, thank God you're here, man.

Fitch sees Nick. Now he looks down and sees Marlee below.

Nick puts his arms around Jerry and Millie. PHOTOGRAPHERS take photographs. REPORTERS yell questions. TV LIGHTS glare. Everybody loves Nick. Well, not everyone.

TV REPORTER

Mr. Easter, as the jury foreman, why such a large award?

Nick is about to answer when there's a warning shout and suddenly Jankle rushes in from the side.

Nick, alone in a circle of fear, turns and stares down the barrel of Jankle's GT-TECH 9 MILLIMETER SEMIAUTOMATIC.

After all the talk, after all the statistics, after all the arguments and the rationalizations... here it is:

The gun. The trigger. The bullet. The rage. The horror.

Everything slows down as the CAMERA pans the crowd.

Millie reaches for her YOUNGEST CHILD, picks him up, turns him away. There's Angel, eyes wide with terror. Here's Marlee, pushing open the car door - though who can beat a bullet? - and here's Fitch, reaching under his coat - but how to get a clear shot? - and here's Jerry, wishing he was a hero, but confining heroism to protecting Poodle. And here's Loreen, lips curled in disgust, and Rikki, like Millie, reaching for her CHILDREN...

... and now the CAMERA comes back to Nick who is looking at Jankle with nothing but contempt, *no fear whatsoever*, and now here's Jankle, suddenly aware of the silence, of the gun in his hand, of where he is, and his eyes, until a second ago blazing with rage, open even wider with the awful realization of what he's just done.

He takes his eyes off Nick and looks around, as if to confirm the full ghastliness of his situation. And has it confirmed in a way he did not expect - because as he looks from one person to another, so the gun also moves, and each and every person recoils in fear and hatred, as they might from any psychotic killer wielding a gun he shouldn't have...

And now Jankle looks back at his gun almost in amazement - almost as if seeing it for the first time - and when Nick reaches out and takes it, he does not resist.

The frozen moment shatters and all hell breaks loose as COPS converge on Jankle.

Nick hands the gun to a cop with a shrug, as if to say, "Hey, what the hell," and walks down the steps to Marlee, who is white with shock, uncertain how she feels beyond relief.

Nick gets calmly into the drivers's seat. Marlee gets in next to him. They are about to drive away when.

FITCH

Hey.

He walks up and leans his hands on the open window by Marlee.

FITCH

It was war, you won, and there's not a damn thing I can do about it. But don't ever try this on me again, okay?

The menace is clear. They nod. Fitch turns and looks at Nick.

FITCH

What I was saying about her cutting you loose? I don't believe it for a minute.

— (to Marlee)

As for his poems, they were all about you, except one. And if I'd ever had a woman love me like he loves you, I wouldn't be who I am today.

He nods at them, a dignified farewell, turns, and walks away.

INT. SUV - DAY

Nick lets off the brake and they slide away, Nick looking only once in the rearview mirror at Fitch walking away, and at his eleven friends waving to him from the steps.

Now he glances at Marlee. She looks back at him. He looks ahead. And then he looks again and smiles and she smiles back.

EXT. HIGHWAY OUTSIDE NEW ORLEANS. HIGH ANGLE - DAY

The SUV drives through verdant countryside. Now it turns off the road.

INT. SUV - DAY

The car stops. Nick looks at Marlee. Marlee feels for the lever beside her seat. She pulls it. The seat tips back. She undoes the buttons down the front of her dress.

NICK

We better make the best of this. It could be at least an hour or two before we get another chance...

He starts to kiss her.

INT. FITCH'S HQ - NIGHT

Fitch sits at his desk, brooding. Now he reaches under his arm and takes out a gun. He puts it on the desk and stares at it with something verging on disgust. And now... What's that? His eyes fix on:

A BOTTLE OF WHISKEY tucked under some legal papers on the desk next to his, Oliver's desk. Fitch reaches for it, looks at it up close, unscrews the cap, and brings it toward his mouth. At which point...

A FAT HAND intervenes.

DOYLE

You don't want that, not really.

Fitch looks up at Doyle with utter hopelessness. Doyle pulls the bottle away and pours it into a trash can.

DOYLE

You win some, you lose some... big
fucking deal.

MOVEMENT on the big TV SCREEN makes them turn. The BRIEFCASE CAMERA, left under a table in the excitement, still sends back the image of the empty jury box. A MOP passes by.

FITCH

Well, we sure as hell lost this one.

The Mop hits the case. The SHOT TILTS, and falls sideways.

DOYLE

Let's go fetch that case and then I'll
take you out to dinner.

They start to walk toward the door.

FITCH

Italian.

DOYLE

Vegetarian.

FITCH

Cajun

DOYLE

Vegetarian.

FITCH

You know it's interesting, you're the
only really fat vegetarian I ever met.
You were thinner when you ate meat.

DOYLE

I was not.

FITCH

You were. You'd do better to eat a
normal diet, just less of it. You're
a carnivore, it's obvious, and so with
just the fruits and vegetables, you're
never satisfied, so you eat all the
time. Your problem...

DOYLE

My problem is you.

And he switches out the lights.

THE END